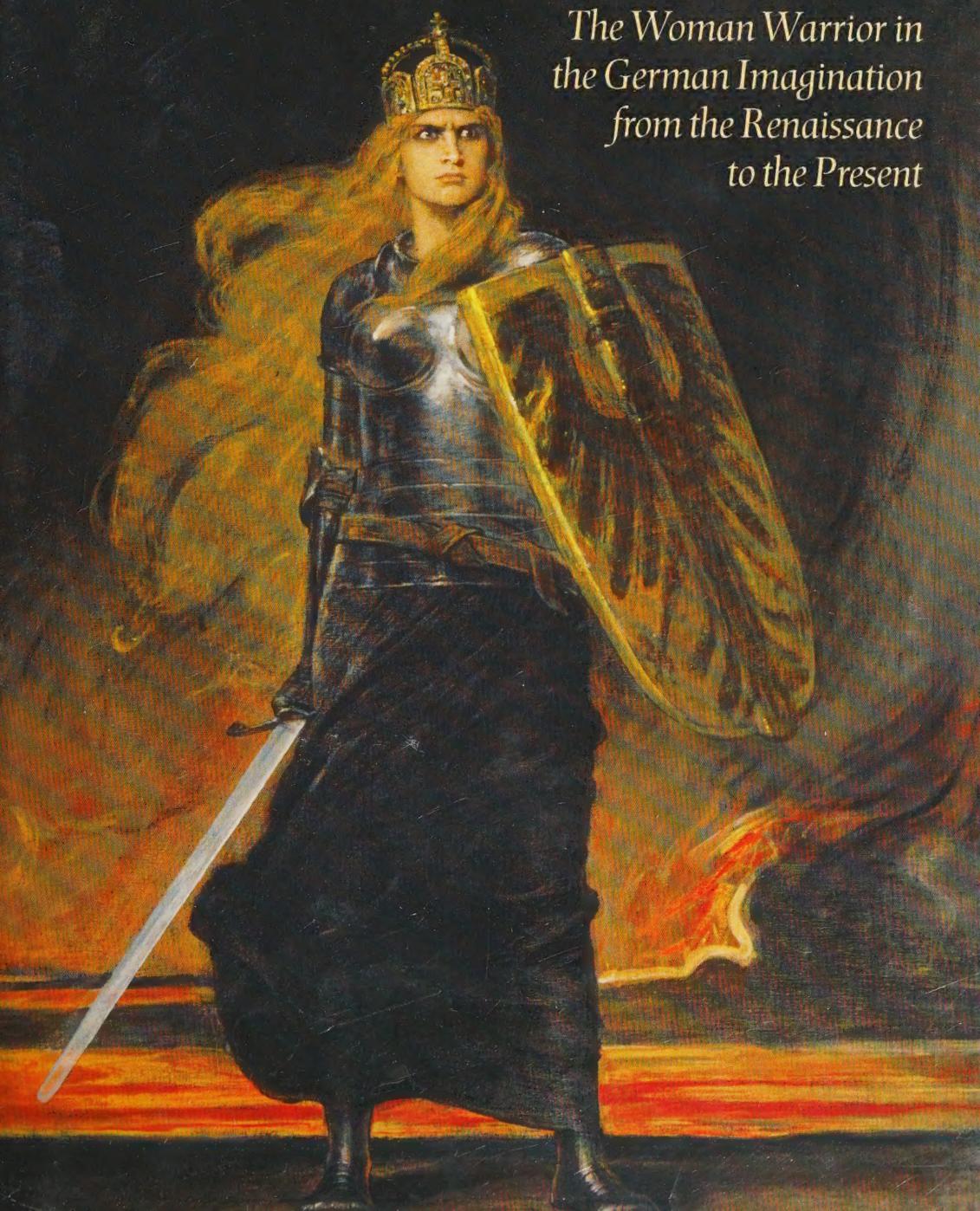


HELEN WATANABE-O'KELLY

# Beauty or Beast?

*The Woman Warrior in  
the German Imagination  
from the Renaissance  
to the Present*



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# BEAUTY OR BEAST?



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THE GERMAN IMAGINATION  
FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO  
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HELEN WATANABE-O'KELLY

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For Alice and Rose



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# Staking Out the Battlefield<sup>1</sup>

## The woman warrior in German culture

**B**randishing their swords, a regiment of women warriors strides across the battlefield of German culture<sup>2</sup>—on the stage, in the opera house, on the page, and in paintings and prints. These warriors are the subject of this book. In some cases they are depictions of historical figures—Joan of Arc (1412–31), Charlotte Corday (1768–93), Eleonore Prochaska (1785–1813)—but in most cases they are re-imaginings of women warriors to be found in mythology, ancient and medieval history, and the Bible. These ancient sources of western culture tell stories about the woman warrior because she is, by definition, a transgressive and therefore frightening figure. Just as these sources tell stories about other terrifying visions—the son sleeping with his mother, the father sacrificing his own child, the mother killing her children—so they tell them about the woman who leaves her proper female sphere, takes up a weapon, goes to war and, in some cases, even kills. She may be doing this from the best of motives, she may be mandated by God, the gods, or her own people, but the idea of a woman with the potential to kill causes deep unease. Such a woman has to be made safe by being tamed in some way—either by death, by defloration, or both.

The fact that so many of these fantasies are of ancient origin lends them a peculiar authority. Women must be like this, is the implication, since ‘people’ have always imagined them like this. But ‘people’ in this context

<sup>1</sup> Note to the reader: This chapter defines the subject of this book, and sets out the most important features of the representation of the woman warrior in German-speaking culture. It is meant as an introduction to the whole book, to be read alongside whichever of the later chapters the reader is most interested in.

<sup>2</sup> ‘German’ is often used in this book to mean ‘German-speaking’. The cultural area being discussed covers a range of different states over the long time-span under review, from the Holy Roman Empire at the beginning of the period to the states of the twentieth century.

means men. There are very few women writers or artists known to us either from the ancient world, from Old Testament times, or even from the Middle Ages, so the originators of these imaginings about women were men, just as the consumers of the imaginings were men. Men did the reading and the writing, just as they did the looking and the painting. In the specifically German context this male dominance lasts even longer than in the Italian, French, or English context, for there is a dearth of published writing by women that is not religious before the late eighteenth century, and it is not until the early twentieth century that there are musical and visual works by women in any great number. In addition, very few women writers before 1950 have made it into the canon of German literature. So the representations of women which consumers of European and German art encounter—often extremely vivid and compelling representations—are of women by men. Representations of the woman warrior are no exception. It must be concluded, therefore, that they convey male desires and male fears.

In a religious age such as the early modern period, Divine Providence could be relied on to make the woman warrior safe. She could even be God's instrument, as is the biblical figure of Judith. If God had authorized such a woman to kill, He could be relied on to ensure that she did not remain a danger to men when her mission was accomplished. Even if such a woman was not directly mandated by God, Providence would still ensure that she would be removed from the scene and order restored. Hans Jakob von Grimmelshausen's unregenerate soldier and prostitute Courasche is the exception here,<sup>3</sup> for it is apparently impossible to annihilate her. This is precisely the point in her case, however, for she is an allegorical figure representing the temptations of the flesh and a disordered world, and is therefore not mortal at all. When secularism begins to gain ground, that is, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the woman warrior is imagined as a real woman and therefore as a much more extreme and dangerous figure with a greater potential for agency and a greater potential to cause disorder. She can still be allowed to kill if she does so on behalf of the nation, but again only if, ultimately, she is tamed—that is, killed—at the end. The late nineteenth century transmutes the woman warrior into the *femme fatale*. In contrast to the warrior, whose potential for violence is open and official, the

<sup>3</sup> Courasche is the eponymous heroine of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's story first published in 1670: *Trutz Simplex, Oder Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landstörzerin Courasche*. Quotations are from Grimmelshausen, *Simplicianische Schriften* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976).

*femme fatale* is a seductress whose malevolent potential for violence is hidden, making her a figure full of perverse and sadistic desire and, at the same time, of perverse and sadistic fascination.<sup>4</sup> This basic conflict informs all portrayals of the woman warrior by men—the conflict between woman as embodiment of beauty and as object of desire, and woman as beastly, the personification of temptation, of duplicity, and of crazed violence, the object of fear and loathing. Hence the title of this book.

It might be objected that all western cultures re-imagine the women warriors to be found in classical mythology and the Bible, so why focus on the German-speaking world? Because, so this book contends, the figure of the woman warrior has a continuous prominence and importance there that it does not have in any other western culture. The woman with the sword, whether as Amazon, Judith, Valkyrie, or heroic maiden, plays a central role in German cultural consciousness from at least the early modern period to the first half of the twentieth century, and it would be possible, though outside the scope of this study, to show that the first two of those imaginings are just as numerous in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> Not only are depictions of the woman warrior extremely prevalent, many of these depictions are officially venerated canonical monuments of German culture: paintings of Judith by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1530) and Gustav Klimt (1901 and 1909), Friedrich Schiller's Maid of Orleans (1801),<sup>6</sup> Heinrich von Kleist's Amazon Penthesilea (1808),<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Hebbel's Judith (1840)<sup>8</sup>, Richard Wagner's operatic treatment of the Valkyrie Brünnhilde (1856). These well-known representations stand alongside a large number of other depictions not universally familiar today: Sixt Birck's Judith (1534),<sup>9</sup> Daniel Casper von Lohenstein's Epicharis (1665) and his Sophonisbe (first performed in

<sup>4</sup> See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1986), and Carola Hilmes, *Die Femme Fatale. Ein Weiblichkeitstypus in der nachromantischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> See Christine Reinle, 'Exempla weiblicher Stärke? Zu den Ausprägungen des mittelalterlichen Amazonenbildes', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), 1–38, and Henrike Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith. Deutsche Judithdichtungen vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Kalender auf das Jahr 1802. Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie* (Berlin: Unger, 1801).

<sup>7</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea*, in *Dramen Zweiter Teil* (Munich: dtv, 1964), 161–258.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Hebbel, *Judith. Eine Tragödie in fünf Akten*, Digitale Bibliothek, vol.1: Deutsche Literatur (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 72820–937.

<sup>9</sup> Sixtus Birck, *Judith Ain Nutzliche History / durch ain herrliche Tragœdi / in spilfweiß für die augen gestelt / Dienlichen / Wie man in Kriegbleüfften / besonders so man von der ehr Gots wegen angefochten wirt / umb hilff zu Gott dem Herren flehend rüffen soll* (Augsburg: n.pub., 1539). Though written in 1534, the play was not published until 1539.

1669),<sup>10</sup> Andreas Heinrich Bucholtz's Valiska (1659–60),<sup>11</sup> Christian Felix Weiße's 'Songs of an Amazon' (she is in reality a soldier's bride, 1762),<sup>12</sup> Johann Gottfried Bernhold's Joan of Arc (1752),<sup>13</sup> Zacharias Werner's Wanda, queen of the Sarmatians (1810),<sup>14</sup> Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's Judith (1874),<sup>15</sup> Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Gust, supposedly a cross-dressed page of Gustav Adolf, king of Sweden (1882),<sup>16</sup> Georg Kaiser's Judith in *Die jüdische Witwe* ('The Jewish Widow', 1904)<sup>17</sup> and his Joan of Arc in *Gilles und Jeanne* ('Giles and Joan', 1922),<sup>18</sup> Friedrich August Kaulbach's painting of Germania (1914)—to name only some of the representations discussed in subsequent chapters. German authors continued to draw on these tropes in the early twentieth century and do so up to the present, though with a marked falling off after World War II. Prominent examples are Fritz Lang's film *Die Nibelungen* (1924), Bertolt Brecht's *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* ('St Joan of the Stockyards', 1929–30)<sup>19</sup> and *Mutter Courage* ('Mother Courage', 1939),<sup>20</sup> in both of which he disarms the warrior woman he finds in his source material, Stefan Schütz's play *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)* ('Antiope and Theseus (The Amazons)', 1977).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, *Epicharis*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 2.1 and 2.2, ed. Lothar Mundt, Wolfgang Neuber, and Thomas Rahn (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005) and *Sophonisbe*, ed. Rolf Tarot (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Andreas Heinrich Bucholtz, *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules und der Böhmisichen Königlichen Fräulein Valiska Wunder-Geschichte In acht Bücher und zweien Teile abgefasset und allen Gott- und Tugendliebenden Seelen zur Christ- und ehrlichen Ergezlichkeit ans Licht gestellet* (Braunschweig: Zilliger, 1659/60).

<sup>12</sup> Felix Weiße, *Amazonen-Lieder* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1762).

<sup>13</sup> Johann Gottfried Bernhold, *La Pucelle d'Orleans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orleans* (Nuremberg: Stein & Raspe, 1752).

<sup>14</sup> Zacharias Werner, *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten. Eine romantische Tragödie mit Gesang in fünf Akten*, in *Dramen von Zacharias Werner*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Judith von Bialopol. 1675* (1874), in Marion Kobelt-Groch (ed.), *Ich bin Judith': Zur Rezeption eines mythischen Stoffes* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003), 107–20.

<sup>16</sup> Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Gustav Adolfs Page*, in *Sämtliche Werke in zwei Bänden. Vollständiger Text nach den Ausgaben letzter Hand. Mit einem Nachwort von Erwin Laaths* (Munich: Winkler, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> Georg Kaiser, *Die jüdische Witwe. Bühnenspiel in fünf Akten*, in *Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt–Berlin–Vienna: Propyläen Verlag, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> Georg Kaiser, *Gilles und Jeanne*, in *Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt–Berlin–Vienna: Propyläen Verlag, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe. Bühnenfassung, Fragmente, Varianten*, ed. Gisela E. Bahr (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971).

<sup>20</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder. Eine Chronik aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1960).

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Schütz, *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)*, in *Eloisa und Abaelard* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1979), 7–56.

and Rolf Hochhuth's play *Judith*,<sup>22</sup> premiered in English in Glasgow in 1984 and in German in Kiel in 1985.

Though representations of the woman warrior are so prevalent in German culture, records of actual woman warriors are sparser than in other European countries. At one time I set out to find records of real women soldiers in early modern Europe.<sup>23</sup> It proved very easy to find information about historical women who participated in war in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish-speaking territories from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. The women in question were in some cases ordinary soldiers who masqueraded as men and took part in actual combat and in other cases they were members of what one might call the 'officer class'—women who 'held the fort' in their husbands' absence, who commanded troops, or directed sieges.<sup>24</sup> There were also powerful women rulers who commanded armies, the most famous of them being Elizabeth I, queen of England (1533–1603). I was also able to find testimonies by women themselves in these languages about their involvement in war. Finding records of German-speaking women before the Napoleonic Wars proved another matter altogether. It seemed that, whether women fought or not, their deeds were not recorded,<sup>25</sup> and testimonies by women about their participation in war could only really be found from the early nineteenth century on.<sup>26</sup> So the

<sup>22</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, *Judith*, in *Alle Dramen*, vol. 2 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 2128–329.

<sup>23</sup> This research was published in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, '“Damals wünschte ich ein Mann zu sein, umb dem Krieg meine Tage nachzuhängen”. Frauen als Kriegerinnen im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit’, in Klaus Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden. Religion—Geschlechter—Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> e.g. Pedro Rubio Merino, *La Monja Alférez. Doña Catalina de Erauso. Dos manuscritos autobiográficos inéditos* (Seville: Cabildo metropolitano de la Catedral de Sevilla, 1995); Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pyrates, . . . with the remarkable actions and adventures of the two female pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonney* (London: Charles Rivington, 1724); and Mrs Christian Davies, *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, commonly call'd Mother Ross; who, in several campaigns . . . in the quality of a foot-soldier and dragoon, gave many signal proofs of an unparalleled courage and personal bravery. Taken from her own mouth when a pensioner of Chelsea Hospital* (London: R. Montagu, 1740). Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. von de Pol, in their monograph *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989), give details of a large number of women soldiers and sailors from the Netherlands.

<sup>25</sup> An exception is Gesche Meiburg, who helped to defend her home town of Braunschweig when it was besieged by Duke Friedrich Ulrich of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in 1615 and whose deed was publicized in four contemporary illustrated broadsheets. See Ch. 6, 204–6.

<sup>26</sup> Regula Engel, *Lebensbeschreibung der Wittwe des Obrist Florian Engel von Langwies in Bündten, geborner Egli von Fluntern bey Zürich: von ihr selbst beschrieben und von einem ihrer älteren Verwandten rev. und mit Anm. Begleitet*, ed. S. D. Steinberg (Zürich: Rascher, 1914). Her life-story was published in

number of artistic depictions of women warriors stands in inverse proportion to the participation of actual women in war. But then, it also stands in inverse proportion to the participation of women in the public sphere in Germany in general. It also turned out that some of the most compelling depictions of women warriors in Germany—Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* ('The Maid of Orleans', 1801), Kleist's *Penthesilea* (1808), and Hebbel's *Judith* (1840)—were produced in direct response to stirrings of emancipation on the part of women and that they go hand in hand with these authors' clearly expressed views about women's inferiority.

This study begins with the Renaissance, because this period sees the beginning of print culture, that is, of the mass dissemination of images and text, in both of which Germans led Europe. It is also the period which laid the foundations for many German political, confessional, and cultural notions that are still influential today. By covering such a long period we can better understand the historical processes that, on the one hand, maintained the potency of the image of the woman warrior over half-a-millennium, but, on the other hand, varied it significantly at key moments in German cultural history. Reformation writers and artists concentrate on Judith, God's instrument in the war against the infidel or against unreformed Christianity; the period after the Thirty Years War either depicts larger-than-life transgressive monsters or heroic viragos; writers at the time of the French Revolution and the Wars of Liberation imagine, on the one hand, heroic maidens who die to save the nation, and, on the other, bloodthirsty Amazons—whether classical or Bohemian ones—as embodiments of unreason. The nineteenth century calls for ever more whole-hearted female exemplars of self-immolation, while evincing terror at the thought of a woman with such potentially lethal physical power. During this century too, the frequent re-imaginings of the Nibelung myth mean that the warrior Brünhild<sup>27</sup> in the wide range of manifestations discussed in Chapter 3 is constantly visible to the theatregoing public as a counterpart to the male hero Siegfried. The same century sees a number of works about Charlotte Corday, the woman who killed Jean Marat in his bath in 1793, about Judith, about heroic

two parts in 1821 and 1828 respectively, and mostly describes her travels as a soldier's wife, rather than as a soldier, though she does fight herself at one point.

<sup>27</sup> As will become apparent in Ch. 3, Brünhild's name has many different forms from author to author and from source to source: Brunhild, Brünhild, Brynhildis, Brünnhilde. The standard form Brünhild will be used to refer to the figure in general, the specific spelling when referring to the usage in a particular work.

maidens who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, about Sophonisbe, the Carthaginian warrior queen, and many others. The question subsequent chapters will try to answer is what cultural work these depictions are doing.

At the same time as nineteenth-century theatres were staging the woman warrior in a seemingly inexhaustible stream of dramatic works, the great capital cities of the German-speaking territories were doing the same in their public spaces. In 1838, for instance, August Kiss's striking statue of the *Fighting Amazon* was erected in the centre of Berlin outside the Altes Museum (Fig. 1). Kiss's Amazon is on horseback, half-naked, exuding physical energy, with her spear poised to kill a lion which has launched itself at her horse. A hundred metres away is Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Palace Bridge, built between 1819 and 1823. The eight marble sculptures Schinkel (1781–1841) had planned for it were only executed after his death between 1847 and 1854, for lack of money. Four of them depict Nike, goddess of victory, teaching the young hero, crowning the victor, helping the wounded hero, and carrying his corpse up to Olympus. The other four represent Pallas Athene, goddess of war, instructing the young hero in the use of weapons, arming him, leading him into combat, and protecting him (Fig. 2). The Berlin skyline is dominated by the golden Winged Victory on the Siegessäule (triumphal column) inaugurated in 1873. The figure is wearing a helmet and holding not only a laurel wreath but also a staff with the Iron Cross prominent on its tip. This development goes hand in hand with the increasing militarization of Prussia, discussed below in Chapter 5 on heroic maidens.

But Berlin is not the only city to erect such prominent public representations of war in female form. At this same period a huge statue of Pallas Athene, goddess of war as well as of wisdom, was installed in front of the parliament building in Vienna, as Marina Warner shows.<sup>28</sup> The statue, by Carl Kundmann (1838–1919), dates to 1874–83, and depicts Pallas Athene holding a long spear in her left hand and a small figure of Nike, the goddess of victory, in her right. (Möller's Athene on the Palace Bridge in Berlin also holds a figure of Nike, but in her left hand.) As Silke Wenk explains, female sculptures were used to depict those virtues that the bourgeois order held dear.<sup>29</sup> Unlike two-dimensional representations, they are, literally,

<sup>28</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London:Vintage, 1996; 1st edn. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> Silke Wenk, *Versteinerte Weiblichkeit. Allegorien in der Skulptur der Moderne* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 1996). This monograph is very illuminating about the sculptural representation of female allegories in general.



Figure 1. August Kiss (1802–65), *Kämpfende Amazone* (1840), bronze statue, in front of the Altes Museum, Berlin.

embodiments of what they represent and have a physical presence and permanence in the same space as the viewer.

It might be possible to regard these classical images as so standard in European cities at this period that they say very little about German culture specifically. The evolution of the figure of Germania, the personification of



**Figure 2.** Karl Heinrich Möller (1802–82), *Athene Arms the Young Warrior* (1851), marble statue, Palace Bridge (Schlossbrücke), Berlin.

the German nation, is another matter altogether. Bettina Brandt traces the iconographic development of the figure from the captive Germania represented as an Amazon on Roman coins. She shows how it evolved from a representation of the German combative spirit or ‘virtus bellatrix’, up to the point when the emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), an arch-publicist and mythmaker, invented Germania ‘as the mother of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation’.<sup>30</sup> Brandt shows how Germania was sometimes

<sup>30</sup> Bettina Brandt, ‘Germania in Armor: The Female Representation of an Endangered German Nation’, in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 86–126, at 88.

understood as a bride, sometimes as a mother, in the Napoleonic Wars, and cites Heinrich von Kleist's ode 'Germania an ihre Kinder' ('Germania to her Children', written in 1809 but not published until 1813), in which Mother Germania rallies her sons to fight the French enemy and die for their country. For the democrats of 1848 Germania represented liberty, rather as the figure of Marianne did in France, but after the revolution was crushed Germania put on armour and turned more and more into a symbol of the nation defending itself against the French aggressor on the other side of the Rhine. Her sword—originally an emblem of justice and of temporal authority—became not just a defensive but an aggressive weapon. In Christian Köhler's painting *Germania erwacht* ('Germania Awakes', 1849), Germania is shown just reaching warily for her sword, while Lorenz Clasen's painting *Germania auf der Wacht am Rhein* ('Germania on Guard at the Rhine', 1860) depicts her in a watchful stance, high above the river on a rock, holding an enormous sword and shield, preparing to repel the French invaders. Hermann Wislicenus's painting of the same scene in 1873 shows a more masculine Germania, now clothed in full armour, but it is Friedrich August Kaulbach's painting *Deutschland August 1914* ('Germany, August 1914') that depicts Germania as a Fury.<sup>31</sup> She wears full armour, the pointed metal cones on her breastplate aggressively emphasizing her female body. She holds a sword and shield, her gaze exudes a wild ferocity, like Schiller's Maid of Orleans in the second act of *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, and she stands on the battlefield before a world in flames. The link to the battlefields of World War I is made even more explicitly in a postcard entitled: 'Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!' ('Fast and true stands the guard at the Rhine', Fig. 3). This again shows Germania as a Fury. She wears the imperial crown, her skirt is adorned with Prussian eagles, an enormous eagle hovers at her side like a vulture, and at her feet are Prussian soldiers and their officer aiming at the enemy.

While this personification of the nation is evolving to the point where it culminates in the figure of a bloodthirsty Fury, writers, artists, and composers are developing the figure of the woman warrior to the point where she metamorphoses into a terrifying *femme fatale*—or else is trivialized out of existence. Two examples of the depiction of Judith exemplify these two trends. Where Georg Kaiser's play about Judith, *Die jüdische Witwe*, discussed in Chapter 4, depicts an immature and sexually avid child who murders by accident, Gustav Klimt's two paintings of Judith in 1901 (Fig. 4)

<sup>31</sup> See cover illustration.

Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!



Figure 3. *Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!* ('The guard at the Rhine stands firm and loyal'), postcard from World War I.

and 1909 (Fig. 5) depict respectively a sexual temptress and a witch, merging the seductive Salome with the killer Judith. Because, by this date, Judith is no longer seen as a chaste liberator but also as a sexual predator whose desire for vengeance against her rapist leads her to cut off a man's head, this makes her seem like a second Salome. We might remember that the date of Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's opera *Salome*, premiered in Dresden in 1905, falls chronologically between these two paintings. It is a work in which a woman's sexuality and blood-lust also result in the loss of a man's head.

After World War II the number of representations decreases, but it should not be forgotten that, even if there are fewer new imaginings about the woman warrior, the older works that depict her are by now canonical works taught in schools and universities, performed and viewed frequently, reproduced—for instance, in the case of Cranach and Klimt's paintings—on everything from ashtrays to posters, while the mass media now make the old imaginings available to a new audience. To cite only three examples: there were eleven separate productions of Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* in German theatres during the winter of 2004; Wagner's Brünnhilde regularly strides across the stage of German opera houses, not just that of Bayreuth; and in 2004 a two-part dramatization of the *Nibelungenlied* on German television, directed by Uli Edel with Kristanna Loken playing Brünhild, represented this quintessential German warrior woman to a new mass audience.

Women themselves only begin to have their say from the second half of the eighteenth century, when they begin to produce secular literature in German in quantity. They do not yet engage with male imaginings, but instead invent fictional women who take part in wars in the real world, imagining a space for themselves in which they can think the unthinkable, even if they sometimes feel impelled ultimately to reinforce patriarchal norms. It is only when women have achieved some measure of emancipation at the end of the nineteenth century that they begin to examine the tropes about the woman warrior for themselves, move beyond the beauty-or-beast dichotomy, and wring some emancipatory potential out of a figure such as the Amazon. It is in this period too that campaigners for women's rights begin to use the figure of Germania 'as the protector of the struggle for and the victory of women's liberation'.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Brandt, 'Germania in Armor', 109.



Figure 4. Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (*Judith I*), 1901, oil on canvas, Österreichische Galerie, Vienna.



Figure 5. Gustav Klimt (1892–1918), *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (*Judith II / Salome*), 1909, oil on canvas, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Venice.

Representations of the woman warrior are so much part of German cultural memory and cultural consciousness that they are still frequently used at the time of writing as a way of thinking about women and terrorism. In the much-discussed exhibition on the 'Rote Armee Fraktion' (Red Army Faction), the terrorist group of the 1970s, shown at various locations in Germany in 2005, Cranach's painting of Judith holding the head of Holofernes was juxtaposed with a representation of the terrorist Ulrike Meinhof (1934–76) without any explanation to the viewer, who, it was assumed, would get the point unaided. In the 1970s Lohenstein's seventeenth-century drama about the revolutionary slave girl Epicharis in Nero's Rome was staged in Cologne, with Epicharis as Meinhof. As I write the last words of this book, I await, in a month's time, the release of a film by Susanne Schneider, who also wrote the script. The film is called *Es kommt der Tag* ('The Day Will Dawn', 2009) and features the well-known German actress Iris Berben. She plays a terrorist who took part in Rote Armee Fraktion activities in her youth. The name of the character is Judith.

## Defining the woman warrior

In defining what is meant by the woman warrior, it is important not to equate woman warrior with woman killer. There are plenty of depictions of women killers in German literature. The woman who kills her own children is a favourite German subject in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust* (1788, 1808) is the most famous infanticide, but there are many others.<sup>33</sup> There are also works that imagine the dagger-drawing murderer—Chriemhild stabbing her husband Etzel on stage in Ernst Raupach's *Der Nibelungen-Hort* (1828),<sup>34</sup> for instance. There are yet other works that represent the *femme fatale*, who by her very existence, but in particular through her sexual magnetism, impels men towards their own death and destruction. The best-known example here is Frank Wedekind's Lulu, the protagonist of his dramas *Erdgeist* ('Earth Spirit', 1895) and *Die Büchse*

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Kirsten Peters, *Der Kindsmord als schöne Kunst betrachtet. Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), and Helen Fronius, 'Images of Infanticide in Eighteenth-Century Germany', in Helen Fronius and Anna Linton (eds.), *Women and Death: Representations of Female Victims and Perpetrators in German Culture 1500–2000* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 93–112.

<sup>34</sup> Ernst Raupach, *Ernst Raupach's dramatische Werke erster Gattung*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1833).

*der Pandora* ('Pandora's Box', 1904), two plays on which Alban Berg based his opera *Lulu* (begun in 1929 and unfinished at Berg's death in 1935).

The woman warrior is a different character. She does not set out to kill of her own accord nor does she ask others to do her killing for her, but, like any warrior in any age, bears arms on behalf of a cause, a city, or a country. Unlike the woman killer who conceals a vial of poison in her delicate feminine hand or the woman who hides a dagger in her skirts or the unhinged woman who in a moment of madness dashes out the brains of her child against a rock, the warrior steps out boldly and publicly, holding her weapon, for she is authorized to bear arms by some higher male authority, whether this is God, a religious leader, the king, her father, her brother, or her—usually absent—husband. Lohenstein's Carthaginian queen Sophonisbe decides to put on armour and go to fight the Roman colonial power when she learns that her husband Syphax has been captured. Geibel's *Sophonisbe* (1868)<sup>35</sup> does the same. Judith, both in the Bible and in the many works about her discussed in Chapter 4, is authorized by the Elders of Bethulia to go out to Holofernes's camp. Zacharias Werner's eponymous heroine Wanda leads an army against the German invader on behalf of her people, the Sarmatians or Poles. Eleonore Prochaska,<sup>36</sup> who joined Major Lützow's volunteers in 1813 to fight the French, did so alongside thousands of her fellow Germans, desirous of freeing their country from the foreign invader. Schiller's Joan of Arc is mandated by God to lead the French army in order to restore the dauphin to his rightful place as king of France.

The woman warrior may be fighting for a good cause and even be mandated by God, but she is still inherently dangerous, and this danger goes beyond what one might call the 'normal' danger inherent in all women as forces of chaos and instability. The woman warrior leaves her proper sphere of hearth and home, kitchen and nursery, and invades the male sphere of the battlefield and the camp. Instead of giving life, nurturing, and healing—all functions associated with motherhood, which is considered to be woman's primary function—she takes up arms in order to kill, defeat, humiliate, and maim. Since the woman warrior does not go to war against other women but against men, the people she is going to kill, defeat, humiliate, and maim are men. By taking up arms, she is no longer automatically

<sup>35</sup> Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe. Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (Stuttgart: Verlag der J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1868).

<sup>36</sup> Eleonore Prochaska's surname is also written Prohaska. Prochaska will be used as the standard form, except in quotations which use the other spelling.

physically weaker than a man and so cannot easily be brought to heel by being made to fear physical or sexual violence. The woman warrior is thus a transgressive figure who has to be tamed. This taming is to be carried out either by sexual means, by death, or both.

Sexual taming and defloration are built into the myths about the Amazons, for instance, in the story of Theseus' capture and rape of the Amazon Antiope and in the tale of the ninth labour of Heracles, in which Heracles has to capture the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Germanic and Nordic myth also tells how the warrior woman Brünhild is deflowered and thereby made submissive. This happens in the Nordic-inspired versions (by Fouqué and Wagner) when Sigurd/Siegfried breaks through the ring of fire to find her on her mountain-top, cuts off her breastplate, and consummates their love there and then. In those versions inspired by the medieval German *Nibelungenlied* Brünhild is the queen of Iceland, a fierce and bloodthirsty ruler possessed of superhuman strength. The king who wins her has to best her in three contests of physical strength—jumping, throwing a rock, and wounding his adversary with a spear—which the hero Siegfried, invisible thanks to his magic cap, does on behalf of his future brother-in-law Gunther. But Brünhild also has to be tamed in bed and turned into a wife, and Siegfried undertakes this too on behalf of Gunther. Emanuel Geibel, in his play of 1856,<sup>37</sup> is one of the few writers to make the audience aware that Siegfried first reduces Brünhild to a whimpering, cowering wreck by beating her and that he then rapes her, before leaving her in the marriage chamber to be raped again by Gunther.

But this does not mean that the woman who has been tamed in this way can be allowed to live. An ordinary woman who is merely rebellious can, if brought to heel, be allowed to live on as an obedient wife and mother. Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590–4) is a perfect demonstration of this. The so-called shrew Katherine rebels against the marriage she is forced into by her father, so has to be beaten, starved, and humiliated by her husband in order to be turned into his perfect—because submissive—wife. But this solution will not work in the case of the warrior woman. First of all, she may simply be too strong to tame in this way. But more important: what man wants a woman in his bed who has the potential to kill him while he sleeps, as Judith does with Holofernes, and who, perhaps, already has blood

<sup>37</sup> Emanuel Geibel, *Brünhild. Eine Tragödie aus der Nibelungensage* (Stuttgart und Augsburg: n.pub., 1857; 2nd edn. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1861).

on her hands? So women warriors by and large cannot be given the option of becoming wives—they have to die. This can happen on the battlefield—as with Schiller’s Joan of Arc and Meyer’s page-boy Gust—but much more often the solution adopted is to have the woman carry out the killing herself, which is at once both a particularly exquisite punishment and a neat way to restore order. Lohenstein’s Sophonisbe drinks the poison sent her by Masinissa, and his Epicharis chokes herself on her bonds; Kleist’s Penthesilea and Grillparzer’s Libussa<sup>38</sup> descend into the grave by a sheer act of will; and Werner’s Wanda jumps into the River Weichsel. Brünhild dies in a variety of ways, according to whether the authors concerned use the *Nibelungenlied* or the Nordic epics as their source or whether they come up with a wholly different solution. Brünhild stabs herself in the plays about her by Geibel and Ernst<sup>39</sup> and in Fritz Lang’s film;<sup>40</sup> she jumps into the Rhine in Raupach’s drama; in Fouqué’s play<sup>41</sup> she stabs herself and then, bleeding to death, walks into the flames of Sigurd’s funeral pyre; while in Wagner’s opera she leaps into Siegfried’s funeral pyre on Siegfried’s horse Grane.<sup>42</sup> Gramberg’s Sophonisbe puts it in a nutshell in 1808:

Entsagung ist des Weibes höchstes Loos.  
Wohl mir, wenn ich bestehe als ein Weib.  
Laß mich frey wandeln zu dem Tode, dem  
Ich angehöre.<sup>43</sup>

Renunciation is the highest destiny of woman. Well for me if I can stand the test as a woman. Let me move freely towards death, to which I belong.

In this way, the troublesome woman is removed from the scene, by deciding herself that she ‘belongs to death’. Sometimes, the woman warrior continues, vicariously, to be subjected to sexual violation and destruction even after death. Georg Kaiser’s *Gilles und Jeanne* depicts Gilles de Rais, the

<sup>38</sup> Franz Grillparzer, *Libussa*, in Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: Deutsche Literatur (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 62241–381.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Ernst, *Brünhild*, *Trauerspiel in drei Aufzügen* (Munich: Langen, Müller, 1936).

<sup>40</sup> Fritz Lang (dir.), *Die Nibelungen*, script by Thea von Harbou, shot in the Babelsberg Studios near Potsdam in 1924. Part I: *Siegfried*; Part II: *Kriemhilds Rache*.

<sup>41</sup> Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Der Held des Nordens* (Berlin, 1810).

<sup>42</sup> Richard Wagner, *Der Ring der Nibelungen*. The tetralogy—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*—was first performed in its entirety in 1874 at Bayreuth. Wagner began work on this material in 1848 and finished *Die Walküre* first in 1856. For the libretti see Richard Wagner, *Die Musikdramen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1971).

<sup>43</sup> Gerhard Anton Hermann Gramberg, *Sophonisbe* (Oldenburg: in der Schulz’schen Buchhandlung, 1808), 168.

original model for Bluebeard the wife-killer, as falling in love with Joan of Arc, being rejected by her, and then being instrumental in her arrest and death. He still wishes to possess the dead Joan, however, and has his servants procure a series of women whom they dress up in armour and present to him as Joan. He takes a pathological pleasure in raping and then murdering these women.

As discussed in Chapter 6, it is very important that the woman warrior remain visible as a woman either by wearing a skirt or by revealing her female body at an opportune moment. Though it was well known to the historian Schiller that Joan of Arc was a determined cross-dresser, he specifies a breastplate and skirt as her costume in his stage directions. (Schiller knew too, of course, that the historical Joan was a standard-bearer and not the killer he turns her into.) Wagner specifies full armour for his Valkyrie Brünnhilde in his stage directions, yet in the first performance of the *Ring* cycle in 1876 in Bayreuth she wore a skirt, a breastplate, and a helmet, the costume that is still traditional today.<sup>44</sup> So long as the warrior remains visible as a woman, thereby indicating that her assumption of this role is limited in time and/or has only come about because of some exceptional circumstance, she can appear in public in the capacity of a warrior and can be allowed to die a noble death, as Schiller's Johanna and Wagner's Brünnhilde do. If she actually masquerades as a man and wears trousers, this makes her a much more ambivalent and dangerous figure.

Sometimes the woman warrior is not fighting on behalf of society in general or a universal cause, but on behalf of other women. This is the case with the Amazons. They are imagined in the Greek tradition as founding their own state because they were attacked by men in the first place, and then of defending that state themselves with their own army. From there, as explained in Chapter 2, the Amazons begin to conquer other territories and build cities. Amazons are represented as warriors by their very nature and therefore as unnatural women, who mutilate their own bodies, burning off their right nipples so as to be able to hold a bow, solving the problem of how to sustain a society without men by capturing them by warlike means, sleeping with them so as to become pregnant, and then killing them. The Amazons are unnatural mothers too, killing or maiming any sons they produce and turning their daughters into warriors in their own image. The whole point about these women is that they represent a society that

<sup>44</sup> Linda Watson, who sang Brünnhilde at Bayreuth in 2007 and 2008, wore a skirt, for instance.

has to be vanquished before the proper patriarchal order can be instituted. The same applies to the Bohemian Amazons described in a series of histories from the Middle Ages on and discussed in Chapter 3. They too found their own polity and live together in their own fortress. They are depicted as temptresses, luring men to their doom by the arts of seduction, and then killing them by means of the arts of war. They, and their leader Valasca (or Wlasta or Wlastislawa, as she is also called), are represented as utterly ruthless and shockingly bloodthirsty. They invert the god-given order and are therefore monstrous. They too have to be conquered and eliminated before true patriarchal government can be instituted in Bohemia.

There is, however, one woman warrior of ancient provenance who does not fit into the patterns just described. This woman kills the general of the foreign army who is threatening her people, helps to raise a siege and bring about a signal victory against vastly superior odds, and yet she does not die. This woman is the Old Testament figure of Judith. As discussed in Chapter 4, she bravely leaves the besieged city of Bethulia when the men are too cowardly to do so, uses her beauty to ensnare the enemy general Holofernes, and then decapitates him, bringing his head back as a trophy. She lives on to a ripe old age, a chaste widow. This story already exercised great fascination in the Middle Ages, as Henrike Lähnemann has shown,<sup>45</sup> but takes on new life with the Reformation. From that point up to today Judith is constantly present to the German imagination, presenting the problem of what to do with a female member of society who has killed a man. The very idea arouses such unease that in 1984 Rolf Hochhuth had to invent probable execution or at the very least life-imprisonment for his Judith, who is a terrorist who kills Ronald Reagan by means of nerve gas. She stands calmly waiting for the security forces to arrest her as the curtain comes down.

From the 1830s on Judith is also imagined as having been tamed sexually by Holofernes, the man she kills. Horace Vernet painted her for the Paris Salon getting up from the bed in which he imagines her to have been deflowered—another favourite fantasy of the nineteenth century being that this widow has remained a virgin. Heine describes her, as she gets up from the bed, as being ‘an der eben überschrittenen Grenze der Jungfräulichkeit, ganz gottrein und doch weltbefleckt, wie eine entweihete Hostie’ ('on the borderline of virginity which she has just crossed, all divine purity and

<sup>45</sup> See Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*.

yet soiled by the world, like a desecrated host'),<sup>46</sup> and Hebbel, as well as all writers from then on, were convinced that Judith had sex with Holofernes—indeed that he raped her—that she probably in her heart of hearts desired him to do this, and that she castrated him in revenge. In Hebbel's version, Holofernes has probably impregnated her as well. If she does turn out to be pregnant, then the High Priests will execute her at her own request. So Hebbel's Judith too has, in all likelihood, organized her own death.

Apart from the figure of Judith and that of Courasche, the other female warrior to live on is Bucholtz's Bohemian princess, the virago Valiska (1659–60), the eponymous heroine of the novel *Herkules und Valiska* discussed in Chapter 6. Valiska, like Courasche, is not a realistic figure and furthermore, according to my reading of her, she is the 'other half' of her fiancé, later husband, Herkules, an aspect of his being. She is therefore allowed to kill and wound men, dress as a man, and engage in a range of otherwise impossible activities, such as continuing to fight in tournaments after her marriage, without infringing the gender order. Valiska's femininity, that is, her body and her sexuality, are not depicted as clashing with her role as a warrior. This aligns her with Ariosto's warrior maiden Bradamante in the epic *Orlando Furioso* (1516), who marries the Saracen Ruggiero and is instrumental in his conversion to Christianity, rather than with Tasso's warrior maiden Clorinda, who dies after her combat with Tancredi in his *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), begging Tancredi to baptize her as she expires.

In the early modern period, usually, and invariably from the eighteenth century on, the woman's sexuality is presented as clashing with her role as warrior. This sexuality is conceived of either as sexual voraciousness, especially in the earlier portrayals of such figures as Semiramis, Sophonisbe, and Courasche, or in terms of a fatal attractiveness that presents a problem for the men she comes into contact with—Achilles in Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Lord Rüdiger in Werner's *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* ('Wanda, Queen of the Sarmatians'), both from 1808, are examples of men destroyed because of their desire for a warrior woman. In both of these plays the male and the female protagonists die. Sometimes this fatal attractiveness leads to the death of the warrior woman because of sexual rivalry between the men around her—this is the case with Joan of Arc in Johann Gottfried Bernhold's *La Pucelle d'Orléans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orléans* ('The Maid of Orleans or

<sup>46</sup> Heinrich Heine, 'Horace Vernet', in Kobelt-Groch (ed.), 'Ich bin Judith', 203.

Johanna, the Heroine of Orleans', 1756). In other works the woman herself cannot control her own feelings of attraction for the male protagonist—Schiller's Johanna, Kleist's Penthesilea, and Meyer's Gust exemplify this. Women are by definition seductresses, for they represent a danger to the men they meet, and women are by definition irrational, so they fall in love at the most inopportune moments. A woman warrior must, therefore, avoid any expression of her sexuality and remain a virgin. Before she enters into her sexuality, she may briefly be a warrior. If she loses her virginity, she can no longer be a warrior. Men are allowed to fight as men. Women may only fight as unwomen.

A further problem for which male writers have to find a solution is that so many women warriors known from mythology or ancient history are also rulers and military commanders. These women, therefore, not only have the physical power conferred on them through their weapons, they also exercise political power, whether on a large or small scale. The warrior queen has a long tradition, as Antonia Fraser has shown.<sup>47</sup> She not only fights herself, she also commands an army of men who have to do her bidding, so she inverts and therefore perverts the gender order in more than one way. Warrior queens are frequently portrayed as monstrous, sexually voracious, and incestuous, as in the case of Semiramis, and as sexually voracious and prepared to kill their own children in the case of Sophonisbe, two figures discussed in Chapter 6. Such representations convey serious unease about what would happen if women were rulers rather than subjects, and could choose their own mates rather than having mates assigned to them by those who have power over them in the patriarchal order.

Mythical and biblical women warriors, and warriors from the distant historical past, can be cut to a particular size as needed, since their resemblance to actual women is tenuous. Their physical appearance and their deeds can be imagined and re-imagined at will. But there is also a body of material that deals with real historical women from the recent past of those who depict them. Charlotte Corday, who stabbed Jean Marat to death in 1793, is one. Other examples are the so-called heroic maidens ('Heldenmädchen'), real women who took part in the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. Twenty-three such women are known to us by name. In many cases they left home of their own accord, got hold of a uniform or at least male dress, joined the army, masquerading as men, and went to

<sup>47</sup> Antonia Fraser, *The Warrior Queens: Boadicea's Chariot* (London: Mandarin, 1988).

fight the national enemy, the French. Some of these women survived the war, were revealed to be women, and lived on for many years. Others were killed on the battlefield, the most famous of them being Eleonore Prochaska. She left home without telling her father, still less asking for his permission, bought a uniform, and joined Lützow's Volunteers. She was shot while drumming to rally the troops of her own side, saying, according to legend, as she expired: 'Lieutenant, I am a maiden.' The lengths to which writers and playwrights were prepared to go to justify, and by justifying to undermine, the actions of this independent-minded woman are discussed in Chapter 5. Their most important strategy was to show her to be mandated—tacitly, of course—by her own father and to portray her in some sense as his puppet. In addition, many writers invented a completely unhistorical lover for her—with whom, of course, she cannot actually have sexual relations—demonstrating, yet again, that a woman cannot be thought of as separate from her sexuality.

Another strategy to reassure the reader or audience that the gender order has not been thrown overboard in works about warrior women is the introduction of a secondary character who embodies traditional femininity. In Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* it is Agnes Sorel, the king's faithful and womanly mistress; in Zacharias Werner's *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* it is Ludmilla, the gentle peasant girl who tends Wanda's garden. Kleist goes so far as to write a whole other play, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1807–8), in order to present an eponymous heroine who embodies all those qualities that his wild Amazon Penthesilea does not, and of whom he said that she was the obverse of Penthesilea, the opposite pole to her ('ihre Kehrseite, ihr anderer Pol').<sup>48</sup>

And finally, we come to Freud. This is not the place to provide an analysis of Freud's ideas about women and their sexuality, but his central notion about women's penis envy and their castration complex must be mentioned in a work about warrior women in the German imagination. Freud was convinced that women are castrated beings who realize as young girls that they lack a phallus and then spend the rest of their lives longing for this organ. They can only achieve wholeness with the help of a being who has a phallus, namely, a man, and only then when this being is kind enough to give them a child. Where can Freud have acquired this extraordinary idea? He reveals

<sup>48</sup> Heinrich von Kleist's *Leben und Briefe. Mit einem Anhange*, ed. Eduard von Bülow (Berlin: Besser, 1848), 50.

the source of his knowledge in his famous lecture ‘Die Weiblichkeit’ (‘Femininity’).<sup>49</sup> He ends it by telling his listeners how to learn more about women: ‘Wollen Sie mehr über die Weiblichkeit wissen, so befragen Sie Ihre eigenen Lebenserfahrungen, oder Sie wenden sich an die Dichter’ (‘If you want to know more about femininity, then question your own experiences in life or else turn to the poets’). He does not say, *nota bene*, ‘if you want to know more about femininity, then question a woman’. Women have already been discounted as valid sources of information on their own sexuality elsewhere in the lecture, when Freud disbelieves his women patients’ stories of sexual molestation by their own fathers, because that simply cannot be true, while believing instead that their mothers molested them. The life experience of an early twentieth-century man—that is, his own—is sure to be more informative about women’s lives than their own account of it. But the real give-away, the smoking gun, is his remark about turning to literature for information. Freud was interested in literature and, like any German-speaking intellectual of his day, was acquainted with a wide sweep of the German texts we have been discussing. Schiller was his favourite German author, as Peter Gay points out.<sup>50</sup> Freud significantly uses Hebbel’s play *Judith* as an example of ‘Das Tabu der Virginität’ (‘The Taboo of Virginity’, 1918).<sup>51</sup> Hebbel’s compelling drama is almost the first extensive treatment in German of the theme of the virginal widow whose husband could not penetrate her on their wedding night, who is longing to be deflowered, who takes up the sword and uses it against Holofernes, the ‘real man’, real because he is brutal. When she lays down the sword, Hebbel’s Judith is more than probably pregnant, that is, Holofernes has given her a child as a penis/sword substitute.

Freud’s conjectures about women—for instance, ‘Die Entdeckung seiner Kastration ist ein Wendepunkt in der Entwicklung des Mädchens’

<sup>49</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘Die Weiblichkeit’, in *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse Und Neue Folge*, Studienausgabe, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969), 544–65, at 565. This lecture dates from 1933, but Freud explains in a footnote that aspects of it were presented earlier in ‘Einige psychische Folgen des anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschieds’ (1925) and ‘Über die weibliche Sexualität’ (1931).

<sup>50</sup> Peter Gay, *Freud: Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2000), 58–9 and 191–9.

<sup>51</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘Das Tabu der Virginität’, in *Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens*, Studienausgabe, vol. 5 (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969), 211–28. See Mary Jacobus’s brilliant article on this essay, on Freud, and on the Judith story: ‘Judith, Holofernes and the Phallic Woman’, in Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 110–36.

(‘the discovery of her own castration is a turning-point in a girl’s development’<sup>52</sup>—have been much criticized.<sup>53</sup> Even though Freud professed himself puzzled about women and their sexuality to the last, his huge authority as a thinker turns into a science a series of fictions about women which, as this book shows, have a long ancestry. This scientific and medical account of women as beings of lack takes the place of the theological account that held women responsible for the Fall and consequently for the exposure of the human race to sin and death, and to much the same effect. When one reads Freud in his place in the chronology of German literature, art, and thought, at the end of the long line of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women in literature and art who are made whole and complete beings for a brief span by taking up the sword and becoming phallic women, one cannot avoid the conclusion that he did indeed get many of his ideas about women from literature. Marina Warner shows how, practically everywhere Freud looked in turn-of-the-century Vienna, he saw the face of Medusa with her open jaw and her snake-like hair, and explains how Freud’s vision of the vagina as a symbol of female castration and as a death-dealing hairy orifice is related to the Medusa.<sup>54</sup> Art and literature do not show us reality—we see reality through them and allow them to structure reality for us. Freud is no exception. As Warner puts it: ‘Male repression seeks an outlet in fantasies of phallic power that women are made to bear, reassuring the voyeur of his own potency, and confirming the rationale of his antagonism.’<sup>55</sup>

## Women write back

In setting out the ground-rules for depictions of the woman warrior I have so far deliberately only used as examples works by male authors, for it is they who over two millennia designed and maintained those ground-rules. Women writers begin to imagine the woman warrior for themselves towards the end of the eighteenth century, at which late date, in contrast to France or England, secular writing by German-speaking women begins to become

<sup>52</sup> Freud, ‘Die Weiblichkeit’, 557.

<sup>53</sup> See Renate Schlesier, *Mythos und Weiblichkeit bei Sigmund Freud. Zum Problem von Entmythologisierung und Remythologisierung in der psychoanalytischen Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Hain, 1990), and Margarete Mitscherlich (eds.), *Psychoanalytische Diskurse über die Weiblichkeit von Freud bis heute* (Stuttgart: Verlag Internationale Psychoanalyse), 1996.

<sup>54</sup> Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*, 110–11.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 175.

available in quantity. This is the very period in which women's subordination was becoming firmly entrenched in a new and more restrictive way, thanks to the definition of men and women according to essentialist criteria that the period itself called the 'Geschlechtscharaktere'. These essentialist definitions mean that the virago, the exceptional 'almost-man', is no longer possible and is therefore not plausible either as a literary character.<sup>56</sup> If hitherto a woman, in exceptional circumstances, might move, and might be imagined as moving, up the scale closer to the perfect male, now, according to the binary model, she cannot, because the boundaries between the two sexes are no longer permeable.<sup>57</sup> Women, of their nature, simply cannot do certain things and should not attempt them. They are not constituted so as to be able to be brave, eloquent, wise generals and warriors, and if they try to be these things they will upset the natural and God-given social order, and chaos will ensue. Women—all women—are by definition weak, fickle, modest, devoted, dependent, receptive, conformist, loving, sympathetic, and emotional. These qualities stand in direct contrast to those of the strong, steadfast, brave, daring, independent, active, aggressive, rational male. Thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) removed the distinction between man and woman from the religious sphere, with its ideas about sin and woman's responsibility for the Fall. Instead, however, they deduced the subordinate position of women from nature, a position that prevented them from playing a role in the state, still less in its defence, and from enjoying the benefits of higher education and participation in the public sphere. Since the distinction stemmed from nature, it must be inevitable and unalterable.

Fichte, for instance, sees women as entirely passive and subordinate. Isabel Hull has spelled out his views on gender, sexuality, marriage, and women in her magisterial study, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*.<sup>58</sup> Basing his ideas on the sexual act as he (and, alas, his wife) must have experienced it, Fichte sees woman as entirely passive and

<sup>56</sup> See the pioneering and now classic essay by Karin Hausen, 'Die Polarisierung der "Geschlechtscharaktere". Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben', in Werner Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1976), 363–93.

<sup>57</sup> See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard UP, 1990).

<sup>58</sup> See Isabel V. Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996), 314–23, and, much more briefly, Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche—Werke—Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 43–55.

subordinate. To quote from his ‘Grundriss des Familienrechts’, the first appendix to the *Grundlage des Naturechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* (‘Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*’):

Die Ruhe des Weibes hängt davon ab, dass sie ihrem Gatten ganz unterworfen sei, und keinen anderen Willen habe, als den seinigen.<sup>59</sup>

Das Weib ist nicht unterworfen, so dass der Mann ein Zwangsrecht auf sie hätte, sie ist unterworfen durch ihren eigenen fortduernden nothwendigen und ihre Moralität bedingenden Wunsch, unterworfen zu sein. Sie dürfte wohl ihre Freiheit zurücknehmen, wenn sie *wollte*; aber gerade hier liegt es; sie kann es vernünftigerweise nicht *wollen*. Sie muss, da ihre Verbindung nun einmal allgemein bekannt ist, allen denen sie bekannt ist, erscheinen // wollen, als gänzlich unterworfen dem Manne, als ja ihm gänzlich verloren.<sup>60</sup>

The calm of the woman resides in the fact that she is completely subordinate to her husband and that she has no will other than his.

Woman is not subordinate in the sense that man has the right of force over her. She is subordinate through her own constant necessary wish to be subordinate, which is the condition of her morality. She might take her freedom back, if she *wanted*, but that’s the point: she cannot reasonably *want* this. Once her marriage bond is generally known to all her acquaintances she must want to appear as totally subject to the man, indeed, as lost in him.

This is a very neat way to justify the exclusion of women from the public sphere: women themselves do not want to be free. Women had to marry, because this was their ‘Bestimmung’ or destiny, but, in Hull’s words, ‘marriage was the institution in which the complete civil erasure of women occurred’.<sup>61</sup> Of course women could not take up public office, and Fichte does not even bother to discuss whether women might fight for their country. Fichte does not think that married women should be writers either. A married woman, he says again in the ‘Grundriss des Familienrechts’, ‘erhält durch ihren schriftstellerischen Ruhm eine von ihrem Gatten unabhängige Selbstständigkeit, die das eheliche Verhältnis notwendig entkräftet und zu lösen droht’ (‘attains through her fame as a writer an independence from her husband which threatens to weaken and dissolve the marriage relationship’).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre, Erster Anhang des Naturechts. Grundriss des Familienrechts*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. J. H. Fichte, vol. 3 (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 171.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 215–16.

<sup>61</sup> Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society*, 318.

<sup>62</sup> Fichte, *Grundriss des Familienrechts*, 226.

Naturally, Fichte is talking about married women, for it would be unthinkable for a young single girl to put herself forward in this way. There is, therefore, no need to prohibit her from doing so.

Women writers are not, therefore, supposed to be entering the public sphere at all, and, if they try to, they always have the handicap of writing within a cultural system and using rhetorical tools that they themselves did not create. No wonder, then, that they were not attracted by the idea of depicting women in terms of the commonly accepted imaginings about them that had become established as the stock-in-trade of literature and art. If they had used these imaginings, they would only have been able to use them to look at other women with what Sigrid Weigel twenty years ago called ‘der schielende Blick’ (‘the squinting gaze’).<sup>63</sup> If they decide to engage with those tropes about the woman warrior that express such deep male fears about women, they are then faced with two choices: they can either simply reproduce them or, in the best case, write against them.<sup>64</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that women writers leave the tropes well alone and invent their own fictional warrior women instead—the subject of Chapter 7. They imagine women putting on trousers and taking part in war and revolution, acting in a way that society would never allow a virtuous woman to act in real life. Fiction, therefore, allows women to think the unthinkable, and they sometimes create the most surprising works. In her novel *Die Familie Seldorf* (‘The Seldorf Family’, 1795/6),<sup>65</sup> about the revolution in the Vendée, Therese Huber calls into question a whole series of tropes about motherhood, women’s role in war, and the institution of marriage as women’s destiny. Something over fifty years later, in her novel *Revolution und Contrerevolution* (‘Revolution and Counter-Revolution’, 1849),<sup>66</sup> Louise Aston (1814–71) depicts a revolutionary heroine, Baroness Alice, who is the president of a revolutionary club, takes part in the 1848 revolution in Berlin, striding over the barricades through a hail of bullets, and then plays a part in the revolution in Schleswig-Holstein. Alice also practises free love, manipulates men to her

<sup>63</sup> Sigrid Weigel, ‘Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis’, in *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 83–137.

<sup>64</sup> Inge Stephan, ‘“Bilder und immer wieder Bilder . . .” Überlegungen zur Untersuchung von Frauenbildern in männlicher Literatur’, in *Die verborgene Frau*, 15–34.

<sup>65</sup> Therese Huber, *Die Familie Seldorf* (Norderstedt: Zenodot, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Louise Aston, *Revolution und Contrerevolution* quoted from [www.zeno.org](http://www.zeno.org), accessed 10 June 2009.

political ends, bears arms, and cross-dresses. There are also isolated examples of women examining male imaginings about the Bohemian Amazons, Charlotte Corday, or Eleonore Prochaska.

But what about the chamber opera about Amazons, *Talestri regina delle Amazzoni* ('Talestris, Queen of the Amazons'), written in the 1760s by Maria Antonia Walpurgis, electoral princess of Saxony (1724–80), for performance by members of her own family in the intimate setting of the court?<sup>67</sup> Is this not an example of a woman in the middle of the eighteenth century examining the myth of the Amazons and coming up with a new vision of them as friends and allies of the Scyths? Yes, it is, but at this early date it stands alone. It is not until the late nineteenth century that women writers and thinkers begin to imagine for themselves what an Amazon state would be like, and to see it as having utopian and emancipatory potential for their own lives.<sup>68</sup> Ilse Langner's play *Amazonen* (1933)<sup>69</sup> is the most positive and affirmative example here, showing in the epilogue how technology can compensate for women's physical weakness and how, in a new age, men and women can be comrades in some great endeavour, instead of encountering each other only either in an adversarial or in an erotic relationship. It is at this late date, too, that women begin to question the eroticized depiction of Judith as *femme fatale* and to use the figure to debate very different questions. In her novella *Königin Judith* ('Queen Judith', 1895), for instance, Maria Janitschek claims an agency for her heroine that comes from Judith's own sense of self, which gives her an ascendancy over the Holofernes figure that has nothing to do with seductiveness and everything to do with sheer force of personality.<sup>70</sup>

Naturally, even when women invent their own fictional warriors, it turns out at times that they have internalized patriarchal ideas about women as passive, helpless, emotional, and irrational victims, and present such characters to their readers as models,<sup>71</sup> thus policing the boundaries of woman's sphere even more thoroughly than male writers did. Louise Aston knew this, and in

<sup>67</sup> Maria Antonia Walpurgis, electress of Saxony, *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni: dramma per musica* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1765).

<sup>68</sup> I do not count those occurrences in the work of any author of the word Amazon to mean simply 'emancipated woman' or 'skilful rider' without any further exploration of the concept.

<sup>69</sup> Ilse Langner, *Amazonen. Komödie*, in *Dramen*, II, ed. Eberhard Günter Schulz (Würzburg: Bergstadtverlag Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> Maria Janitschek, *Königin Judith*, in *Lilienzauber. Novellen* (1895). Deutsche Literatur von Frauen, Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 45 (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2001), 35561–81.

<sup>71</sup> Sigrid Weigel, 'Die geopferte Helden und das Opfer als Helden. Zum Entwurf weiblicher Helden in der Literatur von Männern und Frauen', in *Die verborgene Frau*, 138–52.

'Den Frauen' ('To Women'), one of the poems in her collection *Freischärler-Reminiszenzen* ('Reminiscences of a Revolutionary Volunteer', 1850), writes:

Ihr richtet streng, der Sitte heil'ge Vehm',  
Und schleudert auf mein Haupt das Anathem!

You judge harshly, you sacred secret moral court, and hurl anathema upon my head.<sup>72</sup>

Writers such as Friederike Lohmann and Benedikte Naubert, discussed in Chapter 7, display in their work women's own nervousness about one of their sex leaving the restricted safety of hearth and home, no matter how much this might be dictated by outside circumstances such as war. They make sure that, even though the woman is in a war zone, she should never attempt to defend herself physically, and, in order to demonstrate to the reader that their heroine is virtuous, they show her to be appalled by the necessity of cross-dressing and anguished about how authority figures such as father, brother, or lover will view this masquerade. Yet they do still imagine a real woman moving around during a war in a realistic setting, as opposed to a mythological or biblical one, and Naubert shows the censorious guardians of women's honour to be mean-minded and unjust.

Most of the works by men that this study discusses are dramas: plays about Judith from the Reformation period and into the seventeenth century, Baroque tragedies about warrior women, Amazon operas and ballets to be put on in court theatres up to the middle of the eighteenth century, and the many nineteenth- and twentieth-century works already mentioned. The stage—what Schiller called, in a speech he gave in 1784, 'Die Bühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet' ('the stage regarded as a moral institution')—is the forum in which the woman warrior is portrayed in all her transgressiveness before being disciplined through death. The drama is an official art form, licensed and subject to censorship, needing a public building and considerable finance, performed by a collective, and witnessed by a collective. Being presented with an idea in such a setting necessitates a disciplined response that must conform to social expectations. The stage articulates and enforces social norms and ideas, and presents them to its audience in a pre-arranged setting from which it takes a considerable act of will and even courage to dissent publicly.

<sup>72</sup> Louise Aston, *Freischärler-Reminiszenzen* (Leipzig, 1850), 20, quoted from www.zeno.org (accessed on 10 June 2009).

The novel, on the other hand, is a genre consumed in private, where one is free to think what one likes and express what one feels, even if only through exclamations pencilled in the margin of the text. Though revisionist scholarship has begun to show that women dramatists had more access to the theatre than used to be claimed,<sup>73</sup> it is still the case that, whatever the case with other subjects, plays by women on the topic of the woman warrior were not, and still are not, performed in public theatres. Maria Antonia Walpurgis of Saxony's chamber opera was performed in private in the 1760s, with the parts sung by members of her family; Christine Westphalen's *Charlotte Corday* (1804) was published anonymously and not performed at all. Langner and Erika Mitterer<sup>74</sup> never saw their plays from the 1930s (*Die Amazonen* and *Charlotte Corday* respectively) performed either, while Grach's play about the heroic drummer-girl on the battlefield in the 1870–1 war and Menschick's play about Judith were written for girls' schools.<sup>75</sup> It is, therefore, no surprise that the works by women studied here are either mostly novels or, if they are plays, are small-scale plays to be put on by girls' schools or women's groups.

## Can women be heroes?

In the early modern period, with its one-sex model of the human being, it is perfectly possible for women to execute exceptional deeds of physical bravery and emotional toughness, and so rise up the sliding scale closer to the perfection of the man. These viragos—*Männinnen* ('she-men'), as they were called—are exceptions to the rule of female inferiority. They rise to the occasion, defending their city against the enemy as the historical woman Gesche Meiburg did in Braunschweig in 1615, or leading an army as the equally historical Joan of Arc did in fifteenth-century France. They are *femmes fortes*, women who exhibit qualities of courage, steadfastness, and leadership, qualities that are commuted male. They sometimes die, like Lohenstein's revolutionary leader Epicharis, who chokes herself on her

<sup>73</sup> See Anne Fleig, *Handlungs—Spiel—Räume. Dramen von Autorinnen im Theater des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wurzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> Engel Christine Westphalen, *Charlotte Corday. Tragödie in 5 Akten mit Chören* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1804); Erika Mitterer, *Charlotte Corday. Drama in vier Aufzügen*, in *Dramen*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Edition Doppelpunkt, 2003).

<sup>75</sup> Josephine Grach, *Der Kleine Tambour oder Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1898); Rosemarie Menschick, *Judith. Biblisches Schauspiel* (Munich: Buchhandlung Leohaus, 1921).

own bonds in order to cheat Nero of the voyeuristic triumph of watching her die, but they do not have to. In Andreas Buchholtz's novel *Herkules und Valiska* (1659), both of the main characters, the German prince Herkules and the Bohemian princess Valiska, having surmounted the most fearsome dangers, live on to rule their kingdoms in peace and unity, and Valiska, as Herkules' 'other half', is not only allowed to be as heroic as he is and to engage in knightly deeds just as he does, she is also allowed to live. Both of these characters, of course, are acting under divine guidance.

A virago is still possible in a German play as late as 1757. This is the year in which Johann Friedrich Cronegk (1731–58) wrote his tragedy in rhyming Alexandrines *Olint und Sophronia*, left unfinished at his early death and published posthumously by his friend Johann Peter Uz.<sup>76</sup> In this drama, based on Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*—and it is, of course, significant that Cronegk is dramatizing an early modern source—the Persian princess Clorinde is depicted at the beginning of the play as a fearless warrior:

[...] Du weißt es daß mich nie  
 Das niedre Leben reizt das fern von Ruhm und Müh  
 Mein furchtsames Geschlecht zu seinem Zweck erlesen,  
 Unnützlich, unbekannt. Viel besser, nie gewesen,  
 Als ganz vergessen seyn; viel besser ist der Tod,  
 Als Leben, das uns nur mit Zwang und Knechtschaft droht.  
 In jüngsten Jahren schon erwählt ich Krieg und Waffen.  
 [...]  
 Olint, erlaube mir, da wo du kämpfst, zu stehn!  
 Dein Beyspiel lehre mich dem Tod entgegen.<sup>77</sup>

You know that that life of baseness never attracts me which, far from fame and danger, my fearful sex has chosen as its goal, useless, unknown. Much better never to have existed than to be quite forgotten; death is much better than life, which only threatens us with coercion and slavery. In my youngest years I already chose war and arms. [...] Olint, allow me to stand where you will fight. Your example will teach me to face death.

Clorinde is an exceptional woman, who wants to win glory on the battlefield just as though she were a man and who finds the circumscribed life of most women base and pointless. She is, however, expecting to die and, since

<sup>76</sup> Johann Friedrich von Cronegk, *Schriften. Zweyte verbeßerte Auflage* (Ansbach und Leipzig: Jakob Christoph Posch, 1761). The play was actually written in 1757.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 289–90.

this play is based on Tasso's epic, we know that she will die. Before then, and just before the play peters out in Act IV, she has renounced her love for Olint and given up her desire to be revenged on her rival. She is, therefore, a Renaissance virago, but her fate is the prototype of that inevitable trajectory which all warrior women follow from now on, away from fearless independence and towards renunciation and death.

It is in these decades too, from the period of the Seven Years War (1756–63) on, that death, in particular death for the Fatherland, becomes an essential component of the hero, whether man or woman. 'The patriot as martyr' is Hans-Martin Blitz's term for this development, and he cites Christian Felix Weiße's *Amazonenlieder* ('Songs of an Amazon', 1762) as an example.<sup>78</sup> In that poem cycle, spoken by the young soldier's beloved and discussed in Chapter 2, the soldier dies an exemplary death for the Fatherland, and the language of the poems anticipates the rhetoric used in the nineteenth-century cult of the hero. From this point on, a hero has to die in order to become a hero.

The definition of the hero in some of the major encyclopedias and dictionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries does not at first appear to include dying as an essential condition. A second look reveals, however, that death and suffering are brought in by the back door. Zedler's encyclopedia explains in 1732, for instance, that the hero is 'von Natur mit einer ansehnlichen Gestalt und ausnehmender Leibesstärke begabet, durch tapffere Thaten Ruhm erlanget, und sich über den gemeinen Stand derer Menschen erhoben...' ('the hero is gifted by nature with a commanding figure and exceptional physical strength, achieves fame by brave deeds, and has raised himself above the ordinary run of people').<sup>79</sup> However, Christ is cited as a pre-eminent example of a hero, so the idea of passive suffering and of death for mankind mitigates the initial impression of a he-man and warrior. Half-a-century later Johann Christoph Adelung's dictionary of 1793 also singles out exceptional physical strength, bravery, and resolution, and stresses that the hero has to use these qualities for the good of many, but this work too cites Christ as a hero.<sup>80</sup> In 1877, more than eighty years later

<sup>78</sup> Hans-Martin Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland. Die deutsche Nation im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000), 262.

<sup>79</sup> Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle und Leipzig: Zedler, 1732), vol. 12, col. 1214.

<sup>80</sup> Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammaticisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1793–1801), 1094–5.

again, the dictionary of the Brothers Grimm had reached volume 10 and therefore the letter 'H'.<sup>81</sup> According to the very substantial entry on the hero, the first and principal meaning is given as brave and skilful warrior but, again, the second meaning is of a spiritual hero like Christ, because 'er hat über hölle und tod besiegt' ('he has triumphed over hell and death').<sup>82</sup> This kind of victory is wholly different from the victory of a warrior who overcomes ten other men or of a muscle-man who kills a dragon. It is a passive victory in which exceptional suffering bravely borne is the outstanding virtue on display. Then Grimms' dictionary goes on to say that the term hero can be applied to any person who does something exceptional, to the person in the centre of events or in the centre of a literary work, and finally, that in older usage the term hero was used to mean any man, stemming from the idea that all men are warriors ('aus der anschauung der allgemeinen wehrhaftigkeit'). These definitions, spread over 150 years, all include exceptional physical strength, courage in the use of arms, exceptional actions for the good of others, and imply that hero often means warrior, but all include the idea that passive suffering and death for the greater good can be heroic too.

So it would appear, on the face of it, that women can be heroes. Schiller's Joan of Arc, Werner's Wanda, queen of the Sarmatians, and any of the Judith figures before Kaiser's all show exceptional strength in the use of arms. They and Caroline de la Motte Fouqué's Elisabeth de la Rochefoucauld, the historical figure of Eleonore Prochaska, Brünhild in some versions of her story, Meyer's Gust Leubelfing who dies at the Battle of Lützen, serving the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus, all show extraordinary—extraordinary for a woman, that is—physical strength and courage, and all act and die for the greater good. They have, however, one insuperable barrier to becoming a hero, and it is not something that they do, it is something that they are: they are women. Their sex will always stand between them and the status of a hero. They have to renounce love, rise above desire, refuse the advances even of a good man whom they love; they cannot even entertain the thought of being mothers. In work after work by male authors, the woman warrior has publicly to renounce her own womanly nature and then die. This is shown in most of the works examined in this study, and is exemplified particularly clearly by the works depicting the heroic maidens of the

<sup>81</sup> Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854–1960), vol. 10 (1877), cols. 930–7.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., col. 932.

Napoleonic Wars examined in Chapter 5. Only women writers do not see a conflict between having a woman's body—and therefore a woman's sexuality—and heroism. Elisabeth Grube, for instance, in her play *Die Lützower* ('Lützow's Volunteers') of 1864 does not feel she has to give Eleonore Prochaska a wholly fictitious lover so that Eleonore may be seen to renounce him. Most daring of all—uniquely daring, in fact—is Louise Aston's Alice. She is not a virgin, is not married, and certainly does not renounce love and desire. Male writers do not see things this way.

Another factor comes into play too. As Germany becomes more militarized and centralized, Germania, the personification of the nation, needs male heroes to fight for her, not female ones. It is Siegfried, after all, not Brünhild, who kills the dragon. She may kill herself, but he kills the enemy. Emanuel Geibel's play *Sophonisbe* (1868) illustrates very well the development in the conception of heroism from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>83</sup> When Daniel Casper von Lohenstein dramatizes the story of Sophonisbe in 1666, the heroine is the centre of the action, a strong and feisty Carthaginian queen. She is prepared to lead an army and to sacrifice her own children, and she hurls defiance at the Roman colonizer to the last. She never meets Scipio face to face, however, and goes nobly to her death by drinking the poison sent her by Masinissa, the Roman ally whom she has suborned. The poison is the last service he can render her, as it saves her from the dishonour of being taken to Rome to figure in the triumph of the Roman general Scipio. Scipio is certainly the model statesman in Lohenstein's play, but Sophonisbe is the figure who possesses a heroic dimension.

Geibel provides a very different take on the story. At the end of Act I and as in the original story, Sophonisbe is shown putting on her armour and taking up her weapons to fight the Roman enemy, a task she has to assume because in Geibel's version her husband Syphax is dead. Geibel has him fall on his dagger in a hero's death to avoid dishonour on the battlefield and, with his dying breath, he sends Sophonisbe this dagger to encourage her to kill herself also. She, however, has a plan to win the war and beat the Romans: she persuades the Romanized Carthaginian Masinissa to break his oath of loyalty to Rome and come over to her side with his troops. Geibel's greatest innovation is then to have Sophonisbe and Scipio meet *à deux* in several long scenes and to make their relationship the central one, not that between Masinissa and Sophonisbe. On the first occasion when

<sup>83</sup> Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe. Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1868).

Sophonisbe meets Scipio at the end of Act III she already recognizes his heroic dimension—‘Welch ein Mann!’ (‘What a man!’),<sup>84</sup> she exclaims—even though, indeed precisely because, he has taken her prisoner and thwarted her plan. In a long scene between the two of them—Act IV, scene 2—he treats her with great respect, magnanimity, and trust, whereupon Sophonisbe falls in love with him! On being told, wrongly as it turns out, that he intends to take her to Rome as part of the spoils of war, she feels intense anger against him and wants revenge. She creeps into his tent at dead of night, intending to kill him with the dagger her late husband sent her. Here, however, she sees a letter Scipio has written to the authorities in Rome, saying that he wants to make her his friend and ally. Scipio appears and Sophonisbe confesses all, saying:

O bitter als der Tod  
Ist dies Gefühl, daß ich so klein, so ganz  
Dein unwerth war.<sup>85</sup>

Oh more bitter than death is this feeling, that I am so small, so wholly unworthy of you.

She confesses her love for him, telling him that in him she saw ‘meinen kühnsten Traum... erfüllt’ (‘my wildest dream fulfilled’).<sup>86</sup> She explains how it is possible for her to be so open:

Ich bin  
Nicht schamlos, Scipio. Nur weil ich Verzicht  
Gethan auf Alles, darf ich Alles sagen,  
Und wie aus Wolken red’ ich schon zu dir.<sup>87</sup>

I am not shameless, Scipio. Only because I have renounced everything may I say everything. I speak to you as though from the clouds.

Having said this, she stabs herself with her husband’s dagger. Sophonisbe has recognized Scipio’s greatness and his heroic nature, and so removes herself from the scene. She dies not because she is a hero, but because he is, and because she will always be inferior to him. Scipio mourns her for all of four lines, orders her corpse to be cremated, and then has the military trumpets sound for his march on Zama, where, as history tells us, he fought the final and decisive battle of the Second Punic War. Geibel takes a story about a famous warrior queen and turns her into a woman who falls in love with her

<sup>84</sup> Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe*, 98.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

own conqueror and kills herself, clearing the way for his heroic victory. Scipio is the hero of this play, successful in war, magnanimous in victory. Germans wanted a male hero in the years before the establishment of the German Empire in 1871 and they continued to want one until 1945.

Gustav Roethe (1859–1926), professor of German Studies at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin University, puts this with exemplary clarity in a speech entitled ‘Deutsches Heldenamt’ ('German Heroism') that he gave in 1906 on the occasion of the birthday of the emperor Wilhelm II. This is his opening:

Das deutsche Land ist heute übersät mit einer Fülle gepanzerter Machtweiber in Marmor und Bronze, die als ‚Germania‘ das Symbol unserer nationalen Einheit darstellen sollen. Ich würde mich dieser undeutschen künstlerischen Ausdrucksform nicht freuen, selbst wenn sie ästhetisch wertvoller geraten wäre. Sie berührt uns nicht das Herz. Die frostige weibliche Personifikation hat für uns nie Blut und Leben gewonnen. Der Deutsche hat von jeher sein Ideal, den Inbegriff seiner Wünsche, in die Gestalt des *Helden* gekleidet. Der Held aber ist ein Mann.<sup>88</sup>

The German lands are strewn today with a plenitude of powerful women in marble and bronze, who as ‘Germania’ are supposed to represent the symbol of our national unity. I would not rejoice at this un-German form of artistic expression even if it were of higher aesthetic value. It does not touch our hearts. The chilly female personification has never acquired blood and life for us. The German has always clothed his ideal, the quintessence of his desires, in the form of a *hero*. The hero, however, is a man.

Women cannot be heroes. Why? Because they are women. If they want to be heroes, they have to create a fictional space all their own, as the women writers discussed in Chapter 7 do. Even then it is the exceptional writer who manages to show that the heroine’s femininity is not necessarily a problem on the battlefield.

<sup>88</sup> Gustav Roethe, ‘Deutsches Heldenamt’, in *Deutsche Reden* (Leipzig: Quelle u. Meyer, 1927), 1–18, at 1.

## Amazons: Warriors or Women?

The mythical figure of the Amazon poses a greater challenge to patriarchal notions than any of the other tropes of the woman warrior examined in this study.<sup>1</sup> She does so as an individual, because, uniquely, she is a warrior by definition, rather than taking up arms for a brief period to save her people in their hour of need. Again, uniquely, she is a warrior of her own volition. She does not go to war as God's instrument, like Judith or Joan of Arc, nor is she sent into battle by her father, her brother, or her husband, as many authors of works about warrior women would have it. She does not have a male guardian or mentor to tell her what to do and authorize her actions. She is also unique in that she exercises control over her own body. She burns off one of her nipples in order to be able to use a bow and she trains her body so that she can ride fast, is skilled in the use of arms, and has the strength to kill efficiently. She decides when to have sex and whom to have it with, hunting down the man of her choice or sleeping indiscriminately in the dark with a number of men so that she may be impregnated. She is virginal in her ascetic warrior lifestyle, but whorish in her indiscriminate mating practices. Once she has given birth, she does not accept the role of mother with all its concomitant emotions and attitudes, just as she does not accept the role of wife. She rejects her male children, either killing them, mutilating them, giving them away, or enslaving them, and keeps only the female children. For the Amazon, biology is not destiny. Amazons refute the notion that women of their very nature are physically weak, mentally passive, and emotionally labile, and that they need a man in order to function. The Amazon only needs a man in order to become pregnant, but she can do everything else for herself.

<sup>1</sup> See Josine Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

The Amazon's body is central to representations of her on classical vases and statuary and in the classicizing art of later times, and encapsulates her ambivalent femininity. Her light, loose clothing, reaching to just above the knee, indicates her freedom and autonomy, but it often leaves one of her breasts, *the* primary sign of female identity, bare and proclaims her more a woman than a warrior (Fig. 6).<sup>2</sup> At the same time, she is said to mutilate one of her breasts in order to be able to use a bow, so she is an unwoman, a woman who does not have the full complement of womanly attributes. Breasts as signifiers are central to the idea of the Amazon, and according to one of the most common etymologies, popularized by Diodorus Siculus in the first century CE, the word Amazon means '*a-mazos*', without a breast.

But the Amazon is not a lone figure, a virago, an exception, like all the other women warriors discussed in this study, for she forms part of, and fights on behalf of, an all-female Amazon state, an alternative society to the patriarchal one. Amazons found cities, conquer territories, and govern, so they are rulers as well as warriors. German feminist writers and artists, usually women, who welcome the notion of such an alternative society, begin, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to depict the Amazon state with approbation, as we shall see in Chapter 8. To the male mind, however, the notion of an Amazon collective, an Amazon army, constitutes such a threat that the defeat of the Amazons is an essential part of the myths about them, and their conquerors are envisaged as guardians of a civilized society. Some writers solve the problem of how to deal with such a society by reducing it to background colour and focusing on one egregious figure, generally Penthesilea.

## The Amazons in myth

Where were the Amazons located? Some accounts situate them north-east of modern Anatolia, near the River Thermodon in a city called Themiskyra, but others place them in Libya, in Thrace, and on the western coast of Asia Minor. What these geographically widely dispersed areas have in common is that they are all peripheral to the world of whoever is writing about them.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> Simon Richter, *Missing the Breast: Gender, Fantasy, and the Body in the German Enlightenment* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Beate Wagner-Hasel, 'Männerfeindliche Jungfrauen. Ein kritischer Blick auf Amazonen in Mythos und Geschichte', in Andrea Stoll and Verena Wodtke-Werner (eds.), *Sakkorausch und Rollentausch. Männliche Leitbilder als Freiheitsentwürfe von Frauen* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 1997), 11–34, at 12.



**Figure 6.** Amazon, marble statue, Roman copy of a Greek original c. 430 BCE, Antikensammlung, Berlin.

Amazons are always just over the border, just beyond the civilized world, ready to descend upon and harrass it. They are described as advancing on civilized Athens and threatening the Greeks in the centre of their power. Isocrates, writing in the fourth century BCE, relates how the Athenians defeat and repel the Amazons, thus enhancing their prestige.<sup>4</sup> Defeating an Amazon was also a necessary proof of the valour of a hero. Figures such as Heracles, Theseus, Achilles, Agamemnon, and Bellerophon are all described in one source or another as having defeated the Amazons. As Lorna Hardwick points out, 'the Amazons had a stock role as an index of heroic achievement'.<sup>5</sup>

Myths about Amazons not only relate how they are defeated militarily, but also how they are conquered sexually. As a symbol of such conquest, Heracles, in his ninth labour, has to capture the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyte (or Andromache or Glauke or Melanippe, as she is variously called). Plutarch, in his life of Theseus, written at the turn of the first and second centuries CE, claims that Theseus sails with Heracles to the land of the Amazons near the Black Sea and that he captures the Amazon queen Antiope and takes her back to Greece as a prize, whereupon he marries her. This leads to a war between Amazons and Greeks in Athens itself, during which Antiope, who has fallen in love with Theseus, gets killed. The Amazon queen Penthesilea comes to the aid of the Trojans, and Achilles defeats and kills her on the battlefield before Troy, becoming filled with (unconsummated) desire for the dead woman. The very idea of the Amazon had an erotic charge, so long as she could ultimately be tamed. Andrew Stewart points out that Amazons are called *parthenoi*, unwed girls or virgins, by Aeschylus, Hippocrates, and Herodotus.<sup>6</sup> *Parthenoi*, Stewart says, does not necessarily mean intact virgins, but rather 'nubile young women who have had no *open* sexual relationship with a man'. Once they have such a relationship, they become women and settle down, giving up their Amazon way of life. Once an Amazon has been conquered sexually she can no longer be an Amazon. The only other alternative is for her to die. Once the Amazon has become a Greek wife she certainly cannot be a warrior, but she cannot be a citizen either. The matrilinear organization of the Amazons is turned into the patrilinear organization of the Greeks.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Lorna Hardwick, 'Ancient Amazons—Heroes, Outsiders or Women?', *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser., 37: 1 (1990), 14–36, 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Stewart, 'Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens', *Poetics Today*, 16: 4 (1995), 571–97.

<sup>7</sup> Wagner-Häsel, 'Männerfeindliche Jungfrauen', 26.

The conception of Amazon society as the obverse of patriarchal society is also built into the earliest accounts. Writing in the fifth century BCE, Herodotus focuses on how the Amazons explicitly reject the submissive, wifely, house-bound role of Scythian women in favour of an existence as hunters and warriors. But it is a purely female society only for a short time, for the Amazons found a new tribe, the Sauromatiae, with the Scythian men. The geographer Strabo, on the other hand, writing at the beginning of the first century CE, depicts the Amazons as living in the mountains above Albania or in the Caucasus. For ten months of the year, he says, they live in an all-female society, farming, hunting, and practising military exercises. For two months in the spring they go up into the neighbouring mountains with Gargarian men, with whom they mate at random in the dark. They keep the female children of these unions but send the males back to the Gargarians.

Strabo also describes how the Amazons are founders of cities, and mentions Ephesus, Smyrna, and Myrine as some of their foundations. But Strabo does not give much credence to this nor to the idea of an Amazon society in general. As he puts it:

the same stories are told now as in early times, though they are marvellous and beyond belief. For instance, who could believe that an army of women, or a city, or a tribe, could ever be organised without men, and not only be organised, but even make inroads upon the territory of other people, and not only overpower the peoples near them to the extent of advancing as far as what is now Ionia, but even send an expedition across the sea as far as Attica? For this is the same as saying that the men of those times were women and that the women were men.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, Strabo does not believe women capable of political organization, indeed cannot believe it, for such an idea would undermine Greek conceptions about gender roles. But the founding of cities and states is mentioned again and again in tales about the Amazons.

An important point with regard to later German reworkings of the Amazon myth is that the Amazons are not merely figures from the distant classical past. On the contrary, they are written into the history of the Germans from at least as early as the sixth century. In Jordanes' history of the Goths, *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, composed around 551 CE and purporting to be based on a lost history by Cassiodorus, the women of the

<sup>8</sup> *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. and tr. H. L. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1928), 11.5.1–4 (at 3).

Goths are identified with the Amazons and are given all the characteristics of Amazons just described. In chapter 7 of the history, after the death of Tanusius, king of the Goths, a neighbouring tribe attempts to carry off the women of the Goths. They put up a strong resistance, 'as they had been taught to do by their husbands', and rout the enemy.<sup>9</sup> These women then choose two of their number, Lampeto and Marpesia, to be their leaders. Lampeto is given the task of defending their home country, while Marpesia sets off with an army of women to conquer foreign territory. She succeeds in this, taking 'Armenia, Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, Pisidia and all the places of Asia . . . Ionia and Aeolia'.<sup>10</sup> She and her women warriors found cities and camps, institute provinces, build a temple to Diana at Ephesus, and hold their gains for almost a hundred years. Finally they return to their own kinsfolk in the Marpesian rocks (called, says Jordanes, after the Amazon Marpesia), that is, the mountains of the Caucasus. But even in this account the usual details about the Amazons' sexual autonomy and their repudiation of normal motherly feeling have to be related too:

Fearing their race would fail, they sought marriage with neighbouring tribes. They appointed a day for meeting once in every year, so that when they should return to the same place on that day in the following year each mother might give over to the father whatever male child she had borne, but should herself keep and train for warfare whatever children of the female sex were born. Or else, as some maintain, they exposed the males, destroying the life of the ill-fated child with a hate like that of a stepmother. Among them childbearing was detested, though everywhere else it is desired. The terror of their cruelty was increased by common rumor; for what hope, pray, would there be for a captive, when it was considered wrong to spare even a son?<sup>11</sup>

Here the seeming approbation with which the military and political skill of the Amazon-Goths has been related breaks down and they turn out to be unnatural mothers, monstrous and cruel un-women. Jordanes glides seamlessly from these Amazon-Goths to the Amazons of the classical tradition, saying:

Hercules, they say, fought against them and overcame Menalippe, yet more by guile than by valor. Theseus, moreover, took Hippolyte captive, and of her he begat Hippolytus. And in later times the Amazons had a queen named Penthesilea.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from Charles Christopher Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, in English with an Introduction and a Commentary (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), 7.49.

<sup>10</sup> Jordanes 8.51.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 8.56 -7.

famed in the tales of the Trojan war. These women are said to have kept their power even to the time of Alexander the Great.<sup>12</sup>

Jordanes breaks off his account, saying suddenly: ‘Why does an account concerning the men of the Goths pay so much attention to the women?’ Patrick Geary picks up this question and answers it by explaining that, before Jordanes, ‘a received tradition had already established Amazons as Goths’.<sup>13</sup> Jordanes encounters the Amazons in the work of the historian Orosius (early 5th century CE), but by his own day, the sixth century, ‘they have lost the meanings they had for earlier authors’,<sup>14</sup> but Jordanes still had to include them. Geary’s argument is that Jordanes is following a tradition that he himself neither understands nor subscribes to. ‘Amazons seem to be an integral part of the account of origins of European peoples from at least the sixth to the twelfth centuries’, remarks Geary.<sup>15</sup> Jordanes’ history of the Goths was disseminated in the German-speaking world throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by means of a number of printed editions, beginning with that by Conrad Peutinger and Johannes Stabius in 1515.<sup>16</sup>

Knowledge of the Amazons was in any case widespread throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> All the chroniclers include the Amazons as part of their timeline, the romances about the Trojan Wars tell of the Amazon queen Penthesilea coming to the aid of the Trojans, and the Alexander romances relate tales of such Amazon queens as Talestris, who wanted to bear Alexander the Great a child. In general, as Christine Reinle shows, a negative view of the Amazons was widespread in the Middle Ages. Although often presented as virgins, the Amazons were at the same time accused of promiscuity and of a kind of sexual aggression, so they are seen as both virgins and whores. It was problematic to place the Amazons in a Christian framework, unless it was to serve as a contrast to how a virtuous Christian wife and mother should behave, and a woman could only be allowed to become a virago through her overwhelming faith in God. However, Reinle shows that there is another type of work which depicts the Amazons as courtly ladies: for instance, in the Trojan romance of Benoit de Sainte-Maure (c.1155–60) and the French Alexander romance.

<sup>12</sup> Jordanes, 8.57.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Geary, *Women at the Beginning: Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 33.      <sup>15</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Jordanes, *Iornandes de Rebus Gothorum*, ed. Conrad Peutinger and Johannes Stabius (Augsburg: Johann Miller, 1515).

<sup>17</sup> Christine Reinle, ‘Exempla weiblicher Stärke? Zu den Ausprägungen des mittelalterlichen Amazonenbildes’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), 1–38.

## Amazons in the German Renaissance

In 1591 the Lutheran theologian Cyriacus Spangenberg (1528–1604) published the single most comprehensive account of women warriors that has ever appeared in German. It is embedded in his *AdelsSpiegel* ('Mirror of Nobility'), a 462-page folio on the origins, history, and nature of the noble estate.<sup>18</sup> 'WeiberAdel' ('nobility of women') is the subject of the thirteenth and last book, two-thirds of which are devoted to a detailed and learned account of warrior women of all kinds. Right at the beginning of this section Spangenberg makes clear that it is nurture, not nature, that makes people warriors and, like a good Humanist, he quotes Socrates to the effect that women just need the proper education and training to be able to do everything that men do, going on to say that women should be allowed to fight for their country just like men. If they fight in this way, they should be honoured for it just as men are.

In the next twenty-four sections Spangenberg backs up this claim by examining all the written sources available to him and using them to demonstrate that there have always been warrior women in all periods and lands. He gives a detailed account of biblical heroines such as Deborah, Jael, and Judith, of oriental women such as Semiramis, Rodogune, Hysicratea, and Artemesia, and of African queens such as Cleopatra and Candace. He relates at some length and with admiration the deeds of Bundwig or Boudicca, the British queen who defeated the Romans in 61 CE, and of Joan of Arc, refusing to declare the latter an unnatural woman who deserved her punishment. Spangenberg also gives an account of Scottish, Swabian, Swiss, Flemish, Spanish, French, German, Scandinavian, Italian, Greek, and New World warrior women, in each case with a great deal of detail and with references to the historical sources he has used.

Naturally the Amazons play an important part in his catalogue of warrior women. Already in chapter 13 he mentions the 'Amazen', whom people think are Scyths but who in fact are of German Gothic origin, but he only really makes this clear in his main account, which begins with chapter 15. There are two kinds of Amazons, he tells us. The first are African or Libyan Amazons, who are of very ancient origin for they came out of Africa 2,026 years after the

<sup>18</sup> Cyriacus Spangenberg, *AdelsSpiegel. Historischer Ausführlicher Bericht: Was Adel sey vnd heisse / Woher er komme / Wie mancherley er sey / Vnd Was denselben ziere und erhalte / . . .* (Schmalkalden: Michel Schnück, 1591).

beginning of the world in the days of Abraham. The second kind are the Gothic or German Amazons, who ‘haben sich bey 560. Jharen hernach erst aus der Deutschen Gothen Weibern erhaben’ (‘who 560 years later emerged from the German Gothic women’).<sup>19</sup> Spangenberg runs through all the eight possible etymologies for the word ‘Amazon’, his preferred explanation being not ‘*a-mazos*’ (breastless) but ‘*Mannmätze*’ (man-woman or virago),<sup>20</sup> because the German word *Mätze*, maid, indicates a woman who is ‘eines Mannes werth / die eine Gesellin eines solchen Mannes sein köndte / der mit rechte auch ein Mat oder gleichmessiger Gesell genandt werden möchte’ (‘who is worthy of a man, who could be the comrade of such a man, who would like by rights to be called a mate or a comrade of equal standing’).<sup>21</sup>

When Spangenberg comes to the German Gothic Amazons in chapter 20, he says that they came originally from Scandinavia. When they grew too numerous, King Taurer, a descendent of King Alemann, took his people into Austria and Hungary and a group of them went on down the Danube to the Black Sea. There were a lot of single women and widows among this group who became wild and combative, so that King Taurer could rely on them better than on the men, and he gave them land on the Black Sea. At this point Spangenberg’s narration becomes decidedly critical. The leader of these women was called Frau Heks, ‘eine grosse Künstlerin und Ertztin’ (‘a great artificer and medicine woman’),<sup>22</sup> and Spangenberg links her name to the word *Hexe* or witch, something with extremely negative connotations in the year 1591 at the height of the witch persecutions. He then goes straight on to describe the monstrous ferocity of these women. In the whole region, he says, ‘[sie haben] viel gewlischer gewütet / geraubt / gebrandt und gemordet hatten denn die Menner’ (‘they raged, pillaged, burned, and murdered worse than the men’). They made drinking-vessels out of the skulls of the generals they had conquered and sacrificed from them to their goddess Heres or Diana. Nobody could stray onto their lands because they would be massacred. These Amazons eventually came to dominate all of Anatolia.

In the meantime, Tanausius or Tannhäuser, the king of the Goths and German Cimmerians, who had travelled with the Amazons, died, and there was a quarrel over his successor, so the two princes chosen to succeed him moved away with their people to Theniskyra on the banks of the River Thermelon. The menfolk are killed by enemies round about, so the women put on men’s attire and avenge their deaths. Of course they have to keep their

<sup>19</sup> Spangenberg, *AdelsSpiegel* 432b.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 434a.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 439b.

race going, so they mate once a year indiscriminately, as in the classical sources. After this Spangenberg repeats the well-known stories about Lampeto and Marpesia, Heracles and Menalippe, Antiope and Theseus, Penthesilea and Achilles, Tomyris and Cyrus. According to Spangenberg, who cites Jordanes as his authority, Tomyris is an Amazon too, ‘eine deutsche Donawerin’ (‘a German woman from the Danube region’).<sup>23</sup> He even quotes the historian Johannes Aventinus (1477–1534), who believed that she was the widow of the German king Brenner.

Having told his readers in some detail about distinct groups of Amazon located in a wide range of territories, Spangenberg then sums up the salient features of Amazon customs and way of life in chapter 27. Amazons become Amazons either because their menfolk get killed or because they kill them themselves. They marry their neighbours after a time, but keep the reins of power and governance in their own hands and make the men do the housework, work in the fields, and spin. In apparent contradiction of all that he has said so far, Spangenberg then states that the Amazons did still use men for war! He recounts the Amazon custom of taking a man as a lover for a month in order to get pregnant and then, if the resultant child is a boy, either giving it back to the father, exposing it, or crippling it so that it would stay at home and do housework. He narrates how the right nipple of the girls is burned off in childhood to make their right arm and shoulder stronger, and how they were not taught maidenly arts such as spinning and weaving but rather riding, spear-throwing, and archery.

But, and here Spangenberg seems to want to correct any overly negative impression he has already given, Amazons do not just go to war to be avenged for the killing of their menfolk or to get territory or booty; they also want to acquire honour by saving the oppressed. He stresses that, when they conquer a territory, they build towns and bring about ‘gut Regiment und ordnung’ (‘good government and order’),<sup>24</sup> bringing civilization to people who previously lived like animals. Therefore it is thought that they were conceived by Mars out of Harmonia, to indicate that ‘alle ire Kriege dahin gerichtet gewesen / unbilliche gewalt und tyrannisches wesen abzuschaffen / und dagegen gut Policeyordnung anzurichten / damit es allenthalben recht und ordentlich zuginge’ (‘all their wars had the aim of doing away with wrongful power and tyranny and introducing good order in the state instead, so that things would run everywhere in a rightful and orderly manner’).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 445a.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 448b.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 448b.

Spangenberg then devotes the whole of chapter 28 to an account of some thirty cities founded by the Amazons, of which Athens and Ephesus are only the best-known.

Spangenberg's summary of a huge number of sources relating to Amazons shows how contradictory both the ancient and the early modern imaginings about them are. They are both admirable and appalling. They are said to make war to avenge their dead husbands and to defend the weak, yet they drink blood out of the skulls of dead enemies and kill them in order to prophesy. They build cities and bring civilization to peoples who are little better than animals, yet they are not capable of going to war on their own. They are not interested in men except as sperm-donors, yet they fall in love with Achilles, Hector, and Heracles. They are viragos with many manly qualities who force their menfolk to do housework, but they are unnatural mothers, and their one-breastedness sums up these unwomanly qualities. Amazons, it seems, can be made to represent any kind of woman you like.

Spangenberg uses his sources indiscriminately, going from historians such as Diodorus Siculus and Tacitus to poets such as Virgil, to churchmen such as Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405–64, later Pope Pius II), and then on to scholars of his own day, like the French Calvinist Claude Baduel (?–1561), the Dutch physician, linguist, and humanist Johannes Goropius Becanus (1519–72), or the Swedish bishop Johannes Magnus (1488–1544). He never questions the difference between historiography and imaginative writing and never asks himself whether certain negative views about warrior women carry the moral bias of some of his sources. What Spangenberg does not doubt, however, is that Amazons really existed as a society and that they have left a lasting legacy in the many cities they founded.

## Amazons at court

Since Amazons are, among other things, rulers, one would expect them to appear as part of the courtly panegyric for real queens and princesses.<sup>26</sup> This indeed happens in certain countries. The Amazon was combined

<sup>26</sup> See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Amazonen in der sozialen und ästhetischen Praxis der deutschen Festkultur der Frühen Neuzeit', in Kirsten Dickhaut, Jörn Steigerwald, and Birgit Wagner (eds.), *Soziale und ästhetische Praxis der höfischen Festkultur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Harrassowitz, 2009), 127–47, where the use of the Amazon trope in court culture and in court festivities is much more fully discussed than is possible here.

with the virago of the Italian Renaissance epic to form the *femme forte*—the exceptional woman equipped with virtues that are connoted male. In his classic study, Ian Maclean demonstrates how the *femme forte* characterized what he calls the new feminist approach in France in the 1640s during the regency of Anne of Austria (1643–52).<sup>27</sup> But the Amazon was already a common trope in courtly panegyric from the beginning of the seventeenth century, though it took a different form inside and outside the German-speaking world. Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, governor of the Spanish Netherlands (1566–1633), is associated with Amazons in the ‘ommeganck’ or procession held in her honour in Brussels in 1615;<sup>28</sup> Rubens painted Marie de Médicis as Bellona in an Amazon costume with one bare breast in about 1622. Thirty years later, a eulogy written for Queen Christina of Sweden on the occasion of her coronation in 1650 employs the same panegyric, linking her to the Amazon queens Antiope, Penthesilea, and Thalestris to demonstrate that women are the superior sex.<sup>29</sup> La Grande Mademoiselle, Anne Marie Louise d’Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier (1627–93), niece of Louis XIII and Marie de Médicis’s granddaughter, depicted herself as an Amazon in her memoirs.<sup>30</sup> Her basis for this was the part she had played in the Fronde, when she forced her way into the city of Orleans in 1652 and when she enabled Condé’s retreat in the summer of the same year by firing off cannon. This carefully constructed Amazon persona also enabled her to justify her aversion to love and marriage, and provided the basis for the community of single women she planned with Françoise Bertaut de Motteville.<sup>31</sup> She, together with other ladies at the French court, such as Olympia Mancini (1638–1708), niece of

<sup>27</sup> Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* (Oxford: OUP, 1977).

<sup>28</sup> Martina Dlugaczyk, ‘“Pax Armata”: Amazonen als Sinnbilder für Tugend und Laster—Krieg und Frieden. Ein Blick in die Niederlande’, in Klaus Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden. Religion—Geschlechter—Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001), 540–67, 540.

<sup>29</sup> Nachricht durch was Gelegenheit die berühmte Königinnen der Amazonen Antiope, Penthesilea und Thalestris . . . auff dem Creiß der Eiden angelanget, den Vorzug der Weiber für den Männern zuerweisen . . . (Stockholm: Meurer, 1650). See also the exhibition catalogue *Christina Königin von Schweden* (Osnabrück: Bramsche 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Joan DeJean (ed.), *Anne-Marie-Louise d’Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier: Against Marriage. The Correspondence of La Grande Mademoiselle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See Christa Schlußbohm, ‘Der Typus der Amazone und das Frauenideal im 17. Jahrhundert. Zur Selbstdarstellung der Grande Mademoiselle’, *Romanisches Jahrbuch*, 29 (1978), 77–99.

<sup>31</sup> See Jean Garapon, *La Grande Mademoiselle Memorialiste. Une autobiographie dans le temps* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1989).

Cardinal Mazarin and wife of Prince Eugène-Maurice of Savoy-Carignano (1633–73), had themselves painted in Amazon dress.

The Amazon trope cannot be used at German-speaking courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the way that it is in France or Sweden because German princesses simply did not have enough political power to make their representation as Amazon queens credible.<sup>32</sup> When we find Amazons appearing at German Protestant courts at the beginning of the century, it is in the tournament and they are played by men.<sup>33</sup> There are groups of Amazons in the runnings at the ring in Kassel in 1601 for the christening of Elisabeth, daughter of Moritz, landgrave of Hesse-Kassel;<sup>34</sup> in Heidelberg in 1613 for the entry of the newly married Electoral couple, Elisabeth of England and Friedrich of the Palatinate;<sup>35</sup> and in Dessau in 1614 for the wedding of Georg Rudolf, duke of Liegnitz and Brieg, and Sophia Elizabeth, princess of Anhalt;<sup>36</sup> and we also find them in the foot tournaement held in Stuttgart in 1616 as part of the extensive festivities staged for the christening of the son of Johann Friedrich, duke of Württemberg.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Renate Kroll, ‘Von der Heerführerin zur Leidensheldin. Die Domestizierung der Femme forte’, in Bettina Baumgärtel und Silvia Neysters (eds.), *Die Galerie der starken Frauen. Regentinnen, Amazonen, Salondamen*, exh. cat. (Darmstadt–Düsseldorf–Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1995), 51–63, 54. Also see id., ‘Die Amazone zwischen Wunsch- und Schreckbild. Amazonomanie in der Frühen Neuzeit’, in Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden*, 521–537.

<sup>33</sup> See Sarah Smart and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, ‘The Protestant Union’, in J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, and Margaret Shewring (eds.), *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (London: Ashgate, 2004), ii. 1–115.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelm Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abrisß dero Ritterspiel / so der Durchleuchtige / Hochgeborene Fürst und Herr / Herr Moritz / Landgraff zu Hessen / etc. auf die Fürstliche Kindtauffen Freulein Elisabethen / und dann auch Herrn Moritzen des andern / Landgrafen zu Hessen / etc. am Fürstlichen Hoff zu Cassel angeordnet / und halten lassen / Aufs eigentlich erkleret und verfertiget Durch Wilhelm Dilich* (Kassel: Wilhelm Wessel, 1601), 18 f. See also the account of the English ambassador’s visit: Edward Monings, *The Landgrave of Hessen his princelie receiving of her Majesties Ambassador* (London: R. Robinson, 1596), and Horst Nieder, *Ritterspiele, Trionfi, Feuerwerkspantomime. Die Kasseler Tauffeierlichkeiten von 1598 [sic]. Fest und Politik am Hofe des Landgrafen Moritz von Hessen-Kassel* (Marburg: Jonas, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> *Beschreibung der Reiß: Empfahung deß Ritterlichen Ordens: vollbringung des Heyraths: und glücklicher Heimführung: Wie auch der ansehnlichen Einführung: gehaltener Ritterspiel und Freudenfests; Des . . . / Herm Friederichen deß Fünften / Mit der . . . Princessin / Elisabethen / deß Großmächtigsten Herm / Herm IACOBI deß Ersten Königs in Großbritannien Einigen Tochter . . .* (Heidelberg: Gotthardt Vögelin, 1613).

<sup>36</sup> [Tobias Hübner], *Abbildung und Repraesentation der Fürstlichen Inventionen, Auffzüge / Ritter= Spiel / auch Ballet, So in deß . . . Herren Johann Georgen Fürsten zu Anhalt . . . Fürstlichen Hofflager zu Dessa / Bey des . . . Herm Georg Rudolph, Herzogen in Schlesien / zur Liegnitz und zum Brieg / Mit der Durcheleuchtigen Hochgeboren Fürstin unnd Fraw / Fraw Sophia Elisabeth Hertzogin in Schlesien zur Lignitz und zum Brieg / Geboren Fürstin zu Anhalt / Gräfin Ascanien / etc. Hochzeitlichem Freudenfest und Fürstlichem Beylager den 27. und drauff folgende Tage Octobris Anno 1614 . . .* (Leipzig: Henning Grossen, 1615).

<sup>37</sup> Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, *Triumf Newlich bey der F. Kindtauf zu Stuttgart gehalten* (Stuttgart: Rößlin, 1616).



**Figure 7.** Johann Georg II, Electoral Prince of Saxony, as Penthesilea, in Adam Olearius, *Auffzüge vnd Rittspiele So bey Des . . . Fürsten vnd Herrn Friederich Wilhelms Hertzogen zu Sachsen . . . Jungen Printzen / Hertzog Christian Fürstlichen Kindtauffs Feste / in anwesenheit vieler HochFürstlichen / Gräfflichen vnd RittersPersonen gehalten worden Auff S.F. Durchl. Residentz Vestung zu Altenburg im Monat Junio 1654, Gedruckt zu Schleßwig in der Fürstlichen Druckerey / durch Johan Holwein, 1658.*

Whenever they appear, these Amazons are always to some degree making reference to gender roles. This is done most visibly by means of their costume. That these viragos are all played by men could never be forgotten by the onlookers, since a tournament has a military purpose and consists of an activity that belongs to the masculine sphere, yet the costume the Amazons wear is in all cases markedly feminine. Though they wear helmets and breastplates and carry weapons, they also always wear skirts (slit down the middle to allow them to ride astride) and have long, flowing hair (Fig. 7). The costumes bear no resemblance to the kind of short, loose tunic worn by Amazons on antique vases, medals, or in classical statuary. Still less do the Amazons wear trousers, as is sometimes the case in medieval manuscripts and in the woodcuts accompanying the first printed edition of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* and its German translation from 1473 and 1474 respectively, discussed below.

Gender roles are also often discussed in the texts spoken by these Amazons. In the running at the ring in Heidelberg to celebrate the entry of Friedrich of the Palatinate and his new wife Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of England

and VI of Scotland, the sixth group of contestants is that of Penthesilea and her Amazons, together with the knights they have captured. Penthesilea laments the conquest of the Amazons by the Greeks, which means that after the Trojan War women no longer fight but are mere spectators at tournaments. But since Penthesilea and all the other Amazons are played by men, this only underlines the passive spectator role of the court ladies, who look on as the men show off their military prowess. In a compliment clearly addressed to the new electress, the Amazons claim in their challenge that it is the women who inspire the men to bravery and skill through their love. Men employ the martial arts, women the arts of love, so the trope of Mars and Venus is sustained, but this does not give the women greater freedom. They are doubly disciplined, first by being removed from the lists into the stands, and second by the fact that even their arts of seduction have to be regulated—*reguliert* is the word applied to them in the text. When Queen Myrina and her Amazons appear in Stuttgart in 1616 at a tournament to celebrate the christening of one of the duke's sons, the fact that she and her followers are all played by men only emphasises the distance between the manly deeds of the mythical Amazons, the pretend Amazons in the tournament, and the real women looking on.

Where women themselves were allowed to appear as Amazons was in the *ballet de cour*, a genre that becomes established at German courts after 1650. Here, however, the Amazon role is reduced by and large to a decorative costume. Amazons occur in the *Ballett des Tages*, for instance, composed by Anton Ulrich, duke of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1633–1714), for his father's eighty-first birthday in 1659, but they could just as well be representatives of any nation.<sup>38</sup> Their appearance is even slighter in the ballets danced in Jena in 1673 for the birthday of Bernhard of Saxony-Weimar,<sup>39</sup> and in Friedenstein in 1687 for the birthday of Friedrich, duke of Saxony-Gotha-Altenburg.<sup>40</sup> In 1678 in Dresden, in the *Frauen-Zimmer- und*

<sup>38</sup> Anton Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel [and probably Johann Jakob Löwe], *Ballet Des Tages / Oder: Aufblühende Frühlings-Freude In der Fürstlichen Braunschweigischen Residentz und Hofe entsprossen / über dem Hochwerthen und angenehmen Geburths-Tage Des . . . Herrn August / Herzogen zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg: Als Seine Fürstliche Durchlächtigkeit . . . den 10 Aprilis des 1659. Jahres / den ein und achtzigsten Geburths-Tag . . . herrlich gefeyret . . .* (Wolfenbüttel: Stern, 1659). <http://digilib.hab.de/drucke/textb-140/start.htm?image=00034>.

<sup>39</sup> See *Vers Sur le sujet du Ballet dansé le jour de la naissance De Son Altesse Serenissime Monseigneur le Duc Bernard de Saxe Vveimar, etc. Le 24me de mois de Fevrier de l'année MDCLXXII* (Jena: Nisius, 1673).

<sup>40</sup> *Ballet von dem beglückten Rauten-Krantz: So bey des . . . Herrn Friederichs, Hertzogs zu Sachsen . . . glücklichst erschienenen Geburth-Tage auf dem Friedensteinischen Schau-Platz Vorgestellet/ aufgeführt und getanzt worden, Den . . . Julii des 1687sten Jahrs* (Gotha: Reyher, 1687).

*Mohren-Ballet* danced as part of the festivities accompanying the summit conference of Johann Georg II, elector of Saxony, and his three brothers and their families, the Amazons even sing of how they have now become peaceful and have laid down their arms.<sup>41</sup> Since a peaceful Amazon is a contradiction in terms, these Amazons have in effect ceased to be such. Just occasionally, the Amazons' custom of choosing their own mate is the pretext for a certain sly eroticism. An example is the masquerade held in Heidelberg in 1683.<sup>42</sup> Queen Tomyris leads a troupe of Amazons, supported by Scyths, and a group of manacled slaves are led in and have to do her homage. She rewards her fellow Amazons for their loyalty by allowing them to choose the slave they want and then purchase him in a slave market. The erotic pleasure that both will derive from being united is emphasized with a nod and a wink at several points in the libretto.

There is, however, one work which does engage seriously with the notion of an Amazon state, and this is the five-act opera *Hercules unter denen Amazonen* ('Hercules Among the Amazons'), staged in Braunschweig in 1693 and again in 1694.<sup>43</sup> The Braunschweig opera house was founded by Anton Ulrich, duke of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, in 1690 as a commercial venture, so it is not a wholly courtly setting. The libretto is by Christian Friedrich Bressand, with music by Johann Philipp Krieger. It was designed as an extremely lavish spectacle, with no fewer than eleven principal singing roles, twelve different stage-sets, and three ballets. In the preface Bressand cites as his sources Diodorus Siculus, Appianus, Jordanes, Justinus, Seneca Tragicus, and Lilius Giraldus, so he went to some trouble to inform himself about Amazon historiography. The plot is as follows: Hercules has been given the task of going to Themiskyra to capture the Amazon queen Antiope's weapons (not her girdle). Hercules falls in love with Antiope's sister, Menalippe, whom he takes prisoner in the initial sea battle, just as his

<sup>41</sup> François Maran, *Cartel zu dem Frauen-Zimmer- und Mohren-Ballet: welches Die Durchleuchtigste Chur-Fürstin zu Sachsen setjt. Als der Durchleuchtigste Chur-Fürst zu Sachsen / . . . Dero Durchleuchtigsten sämtlichen Herren Brüder Nebenst Dero Hoch-Fürstlichen Gemahlinnen / und Herren Söhnen / und Fräul. Töchtern . . . Dem 1. Febr. 1678. durch einen prächtigen Einzug / in Dreßden glücklich eingeholt hatte / Dem 5. darauf höchst erfreulichst auf dem grossen Riesen-Saale / Der anwesenden sämtlichen Herrschaft . . . vorstellig machen liesse /* (Dresden: Bergen, 1678).

<sup>42</sup> Lorenz Beger, *Die unüberwindlichste Tomyris: In einem verkleideten Auffzug verschiedener Amazonen und Slaven den 8ten Januarii 1683. Auf dem Schloß zu Heydelberg vorgestellet* (Heidelberg or Mannheim: n.pub., 1683). On Beger and Bressand see Sara Smart, *The Ideal Image: Studies in Writing for the German Court 1616–1706* (Berlin: Weidler, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Johann Philipp Krieger and Friedrich Christian Bressand, *Hercules unter denen Amazonen: Singe-Spiel / auf dem Schauplatze zu Braunschweig vorgestellet* (Braunschweig: Gruber; Wolfenbüttel: Bißmarck 1693).

companion Theseus does with Hippolyta, whom he saves from drowning in the same battle. While Theseus' love is reciprocated, Hercules' is not. The latter is actually betrothed to Megara, princess of Thebes, whom he has never met. She has followed him to Scythia to make sure he stays faithful to her and is forced to witness his affection for the Amazon Menalippe. In a sub-plot two other Amazons, Marpesia and Termessa, vie for the affections of their Greek prisoner Ismenus. In the course of the opera Antiope also falls in love with Theseus. At the end Hippolyta and Theseus are united, Hercules surrenders his prisoner Menalippe, thus allowing Antiope to present him with her weapons without losing face, and Hercules decides to marry his betrothed, the faithful Megara, while Marpesia is united with Ismenus. Antiope, Termessa, and Menalippe, unwed, remain Amazons.

But this account of the plot does not do justice to the opera. Bressand never reduces the Amazons to mere decorative ciphers. They are real warriors, capable of repelling the Greek attempt to take their city of Themiskyra. Hippolyta is shown fighting in single combat against Theseus, Menalippe against Hercules, and the Greeks respect them and consider them worthy opponents. The character who most clearly represents Amazon pride, strength of character, and singleness of purpose is Menalippe. As Hercules' prisoner she is in a wholly subordinate position, but she refuses to give in to his wooing. If she does not manage to kill him, she will kill herself in order to protect her honour.<sup>44</sup> Hippolyta is the opposite extreme to Menalippe. She loves Theseus on sight, just as he loves her, shows him a secret way into the city, thus endangering her fellow Amazons, sets him free together with the Greek Ismenus, and never seems to see a conflict between this behaviour and her duty as an Amazon. However, when she has been issued with a challenge to fight an unknown Greek in single combat, she is still capable of fighting. It is Queen Antiope, whose love for Theseus leads her almost to destroy her own sister Hippolyta, who has a real struggle between her identity as queen and warrior and her love for a Greek.

The opera constantly juxtaposes the twin ideas of love and war, with Greeks capturing Amazons and Amazons Greeks, as in the love-triangle linking Marpesia, Termessa, and Ismenus, and with the captors in each case falling in love with their prisoners. It is the faithful princess Megara's courage at the end which brings Hercules to a recognition that she is his

<sup>44</sup> <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/textb-380/start.htm?image000091>

true mate rather than the Amazon Menalippe. When Hippolyta is united with Theseus and Marpesia with Ismenus, we must assume that these Amazons leave Themiskyra, give up their identity as Amazons, and become Greek wives. But there is no suggestion at the end that the Amazon state is to be dissolved or conquered, and the three characters who have not won a mate, Menalippe, Antiope, and Termessa, seem relieved to have escaped love's bondage. The final couplet of the opera emphasizes that magnanimity (Hercules), constancy, and bravery (Megara) are the real victors. None of these virtues is embodied by an Amazon, but the Amazons and Greeks are united as equals in a final dance. Not until the opera *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni* (1763), by Maria Antonia Walpurgis, princess of Saxony, discussed more fully in Chapter 8, do we have an equally respectful and admiring depiction of the Amazons which sees the potential of the topic to explore a different kind of society.<sup>45</sup>

## Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Mother Right* (1861)

In 1861 the Swiss scholar Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–87) published his investigation of matriarchal culture, *Das Mutterrecht* ('Mother Right'), dedicated to his own mother.<sup>46</sup> As Peter Davies has shown, this sprawling work was designed as a counterblast to the rationalist, source-based, and in Bachofen's eyes Prussian, history of the ancient world exemplified at the time by Theodor Mommsen.<sup>47</sup> Historians such as Mommsen did not accept ancient myths as historical sources, whereas for Bachofen they were a window onto an earlier lost world which it was important to uncover. Bachofen saw world history as going through three stages, each one an improvement on what had gone before. First, there is what he called 'Hetärismus', that is, a society of sexual licence before monogamy, in which women are 'hetairai' or courtesans and are exploited and subjected to violence. The next stage is 'Gynaikokratie', that is, matriarchy or 'mother right', based on monogamy and the rule of law. This in turn is superseded—and

<sup>45</sup> Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Electoral Princess of Saxony, *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni: dramma per musica* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1765).

<sup>46</sup> Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (Stuttgart: Krais & Hoffmann, 1861). For ease of reference quotations are taken from: Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs (ed.), *Das Mutterrecht* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975).

<sup>47</sup> Peter Davies, 'Myth and Maternalism in the Work of Johann Jakob Bachofen', *German Studies Review*, 28 (2005), 501–18.

in Bachofen's eyes rightly so—by patriarchy. For Bachofen the Amazons belong in the matriarchal period, though he considers their society to be violent and unnatural (*entartet*, 'degenerate'). War is men's business ('Dem Mann ist Krieg zugewiesen', 'war is assigned to man'),<sup>48</sup> and women are diminished by engaging in it: 'In der kriegerischen Grösse geht aller Liebreiz des Weibes unter' ('Military greatness diminishes all the attractiveness of a woman').<sup>49</sup> The feminine principle is associated with the earth and then, in its more cultured form in matriarchy, with agriculture, but it is irrational and linked to Dionysus, so it has to give way to the masculine principle which is linked to the sun, to Apollo, and to reason. 'In dem siegreichen Helden erkennt das Weib die höhere Kraft und Schönheit des Mannes' ('Woman recognizes, in the victorious hero, the higher strength and beauty of Man').<sup>50</sup> Amazonism represents for Bachofen an improvement on barbarism and is one stage along the path to patriarchy, that is, to the most civilized form of human culture, but it has still to be regarded critically. 'Entartung' (degeneration) is the description that Bachofen applies again and again to the Amazon. Bachofen also expounds those parts of the Amazon myths that celebrate the Amazons as builders of cities and founders of a more ordered society than under hetairism. 'Amazons therefore function as a term in an argument about the gendered nature of social change.'<sup>51</sup> It is precisely this aspect of Bachofen's work, as both outside of history yet of intense relevance for his own day, that was picked up by women writers in the twentieth century who wanted to use the notion of a matriarchal polity for their own political purposes.<sup>52</sup> For Bachofen there is no question but that matriarchy was, and had to be, superseded and that Amazonism is degenerate matriarchy. 'Amazonentum... ist selbst nur eine bis zur Unnatürlichkeit gesteigerte Gynaikokratie, herbeigeführt durch entsprechende Entartung des männlichen Geschlechts' ('Amazonism... is itself only matriarchy developed to the point of unnaturalness, brought about by a corresponding degeneracy of the male sex').<sup>53</sup> Quite

<sup>48</sup> Bachofen, *Mutterrecht*, 84.      <sup>49</sup> Ibid. 85.      <sup>50</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Davies, 'Women Warriors, Feminism, and National Socialism: The Reception of J. J. Bachofen's View of Amazons Among German and Austrian Right-wing Women Writers', in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Imagination from the Renaissance to the Present* (Rochester, NY: Camden House: 2009), 45–58, 48.

<sup>52</sup> And not just by them. See Heide Göttner-Abendroth, *Das Matriarchat I: Geschichte seiner Erforschung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988), and Uwe Wesel, *Der Mythos vom Matriarchat. Über Bachofens Mutterrecht und die Stellung von Frauen in frühen Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980).

<sup>53</sup> Bachofen, *Mutterrecht*, 106.

how unnatural an Amazon could be is demonstrated by Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), in his verse drama *Penthesilea* (1808).

## Penthesilea before Kleist

Many depictions of Amazons focus not on an Amazon polity but on one single egregious Amazon, analogous to other single warrior women discussed elsewhere in this study. The Amazon most often chosen to fill this role is Penthesilea, who first appears in Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.490–3) as 'Penthesilea furens'. She makes an interesting appearance in the German Middle Ages, for instance, in Ulrich von Türheim's *Rennewart* (before 1250), the continuation of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*, as Pentesalie, in an episode which highlights the central role of the breast as signifier of true womanhood.<sup>54</sup> In this story she is predestined by God to be the mate of the hero Malefer, and the two are brought together by the intervention of an angel (l. 31736). They fall in love and Malefer agrees to marry Pentesalie. She persuades him to return with her to her own territory, of which she will make him the lord, and at this point her body changes:

Ich was genant Amazanes  
Und hatte nit wan eine brust,  
als diese vrawen. Die verlust  
verlos ich, do des got gezam  
daz ich die botschaft vernam,  
ich soelte dich zu manne nehmen.  
Sin guete kunde ie sa gezemen  
Daz mir diu eine brust verswant  
Und zwa an mime libe vant.<sup>55</sup>

I was called an Amazon and only had one breast like those women. I lost the lack, for it was God's will that I hear the instruction to take you as a husband. His good words brought it about that my one breast vanished and two appeared on my body.

'I lost the lack', she says in a telling phrase. She now becomes a woman, and her superhuman strength leaves her body: 'Als ich aber wurde ein wip, / so hat die craft nit min lip' ('But when I became a woman the strength left my

<sup>54</sup> Ulrich von Türheim, *Rennewart. Aus der Berliner und Heidelberger Handschrift*, ed. Alfred Hübner, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 39 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1938). Her name is also spelled 'Pentesilie' in this work.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., ll. 31972–80.

body').<sup>56</sup> The Willehalm trilogy, consisting of Ulrich von dem Türlin's *Arabel*, as well as Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm* and Ulrich von Türheim's *Rennewart*, was disseminated in the fifteenth century in a prose version, of which no fewer than three manuscripts are extant.<sup>57</sup> In this version too, Malefer marries Penthesilea ('Pantissilla'), who lives in the land where the women only have one breast. The Amazon queen cannot be both a woman and a warrior. If she wants to be the former, she has to give up her claim to be the latter.

The Renaissance made its own contribution to the construction of Penthesilea as representative Amazon. Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* ('Of Famous Women', 1361, revised up to 1375) was widely dispersed in manuscript form, but was first printed, accompanied by woodcuts, in Germany in 1473 by Johann Zainer of Ulm.<sup>58</sup> Heinrich Steinhöwel translated it into German and Zainer published the translation the next year—1474—with the same woodcuts. The popularity of the work is attested by the fact that there were a further six German editions of Steinhöwel's text in the course of the next hundred years. Only three of Steinhöwel's hundred chapters are devoted to Amazons: chapter 11 to Marpesia and Lampeto (whom he calls Marsepia and Lampedone), chapter 18 to Orythia and Antiope, and chapter 30 to Penthesilea. Steinhöwel is a free translator, inserting or excising material from his source as he sees fit. In his chapter on Marsepia and Lampeto, for instance, he makes no direct acknowledgement that these are the Amazon-Goths described by Jordanes and that they are initially located in Cappadocia and Tyre, but then Steinhöwel the Swabian inserts a new section which places them not just in Germany and but in Swabia, telling how they forced the people to flee into the mountains for their own safety and how they installed their own king in Augsburg! This makes the Amazons of immediate relevance to his readers.

Penthesilea is said to have reigned after Orythia and Antiope, and is described as being the most warlike of all the Amazons. She despised her own great beauty:

...und leget von ir daz waich wybisch gemüt und tett an den harnasch nach gewonhait irer vorderen und stürzet den helm uff ir goldfarbes har, den köcher an

<sup>56</sup> Von Türheim, *Rennewart*, ll. 31993–5.

<sup>57</sup> See Holger Deifuß, *Hystoria von dem wirdigen ritter sant Wilhelm*. Kritische Edition und Untersuchung einer Frühneuhochdeutschen Prosaauflösung (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus Deutsch übersetzt von Stainhöwel*, ed. Karl Drescher, Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 105 (Tübingen: Laupp 1895).



Figure 8. Penthesilea, from Giovanni Boccaccio, *De claris mulieribus* (Ulm: Johann Zainer, 1473).

die syten und pflag nit wybischer, sonder strenger manlicher ritterschafft mit dem stryt wagen und zerosz.<sup>59</sup>

... and put off her own soft feminine spirit and put on armour after the custom of her ancestors and placed the helmet on her golden hair, the quiver at her side, and cultivated not a womanish but a tough manly nobility of action with her chariot and on horseback.

The combination of golden hair and armour gives the description of Penthesilea a distinctly erotic tinge, and her cleverness as a warrior equals her beauty as a woman, for she is said to have invented the throwing-axe. The accompanying woodcut shows her with long golden hair, dressed in male armour with lowered visor fighting against three men, one of whom she has wounded mortally (Fig. 8). She falls passionately in love with what she hears about Hector and his prowess, and sets off to help him in the Trojan Wars. Her bravery and her sheer skill on the battlefield, on which she is killed, are described in some detail. But there is nothing inherently implausible or unnatural about such skill, we are told:

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 113.

Es möchten etlich mainen unmüglich syn, daz wyber zuo solcher manhait komen solten aber das wondren mag in lycht enzogen werden, wann sie gedenken, daz die gewohnait in die natur verkeret würt, und die von geburd wyber synd durch ir uebung manlich und strybar werden. Zeglycher wys als etlich, die man geboren synd, durch muessig gan und senfftes leben wybisch werden und als die hasen in dem harnasch erschroken belyben.<sup>60</sup>

Some people may think that it is impossible that women should achieve such manliness but their astonishment can easily be removed if they remember that nature can be changed by custom and that those who were born women can be made manly and martial through practice. In the same way that some who were born men become womanish through leisure and the soft life and who are like scared rabbits in armour.

Nurture, not nature, is responsible for the fact that men fight and women do not. Steinhöwel (and Boccaccio) stress that Penthesilea, the warrior, is in no way an improbable figure.

In the eighteenth century German classical scholars engaged anew with the ancient myths, and this led to a reworking of the old depictions of the Amazons.<sup>61</sup> Important German contributions to the reception of the classical world and the understanding of myth were made by such scholars as Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812), Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68),<sup>62</sup> Karl Philipp Moritz (1756–93),<sup>63</sup> Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858),<sup>64</sup> Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840),<sup>65</sup> and Ludwig Preller (1809–61).<sup>66</sup> But if an educated eighteenth-century German wanted to know about the Amazons, he would normally have turned first to an encyclopedia such as Zedler's *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*<sup>67</sup> ('Great Comprehensive Universal Lexicon') or to Hederich's *Gründliches mythologisches Lexikon* ('Thoroughly Researched Mythological Lexicon'). Benjamin Hederich (1675–1748) first published his *Lexikon* in 1724, and it was then augmented and reissued by Johann Joachim

<sup>60</sup> Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus* 114.

<sup>61</sup> This is charted by Josine Blok in her classic study (see n. 1 above) and more recently by Daria Santini, 'The German Reception of the Amazon Myths from Hederich to Bachofen', in Colvin and Watanabe-O'Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death*, 15–27.

<sup>62</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Dresden: Walther, 1763–8).

<sup>63</sup> Karl Philipp Moritz, *Götterlehre* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1791).

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Heyer & Leske, 1820).

<sup>65</sup> Karl Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1825).

<sup>66</sup> L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1854).

<sup>67</sup> Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* (Halle and Leipzig: Zedler, 1732–54), 1667–72.

Schwaben in 1770.<sup>68</sup> Both Zedler and Hederich have articles on Amazons in general and a separate article on Penthesilea, and both are informative, giving a measured account of the classical sources with scholarly references. Hederich, for instance, does not describe Penthesilea, but simply relates the facts of her death at the hand of Achilles, Achilles' admiration of her beauty when he sees her corpse, and the mutilation of the corpse by Thersites.

Hederich's neutral scholarly account is very different from another eighteenth-century work about the Amazons, Claude Marie Guyon's *Historie des Amazones anciennes et modernes* (Paris, 1740), translated into German by the encyclopedist Johann Georg Krünitz (1728–96) as *Geschichte derer Amazonen* (1763).<sup>69</sup> Guyon's history, illustrated with engravings of classical depictions of Amazons, has great narrative verve. It encourages the reader to visualize the events as they are narrated, it constantly ascribes emotions to the participants, and it invents dialogue to bring the story alive. In other words, it is already a kind of dramatized account. Penthesilea's death in the Trojan Wars at the hand of Achilles, narrated under the heading 'Der vierte Krieg der Amazonen' ('the fourth Amazon war'), exemplifies all these qualities to a high degree. Krünitz, translating Guyon, uses a series of adjectives to direct the reader's perception of the Amazon queen from the first moment she is presented. She is strong, courageous, and famous, but a kind of despair has made her much more aggressive since killing her own sister in an accident. This caused her to fall into a 'Raserey' ('a kind of madness'). She is of a noble and heroic appearance, has black hair and eyebrows and white skin, flashing eyes, is modest, virtuous, and chatty, and has a friendly smile, so that she combines both 'die Annehmlichkeit ihres Geschlechtes mit dem äussern Anstande, und den Tugenden eines Helden' ('the charm of her sex with the outward decorum and the virtues of a hero').<sup>70</sup> So, on the one hand Penthesilea has many of the virtues of an eighteenth-century woman, and on the other, she is capable of madness. Priam, king of Troy, thinks he has found in her all those things he lost when his son Hector was killed, and she gives the Trojans hope in their struggle against the Greeks. Her appearance as a warrior, down to her gold-embroidered, dark-red half-boots, is described in detail. Once the battle is under way she is also described as a lioness, and the word

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Hederich, *Gründliches mythologisches Lexikon*, ed. J. J. Schwabe (1st edn. Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1724; 2nd augmented edn. Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1770; repr. of the original 1770 edition: Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996).

<sup>69</sup> Claude Marie Guyon, *Geschichte derer Amazonen*, tr. Johann Georg Krünitz (Berlin-Stettin-Leipzig: Johann Heinrich Rüdiger, 1763).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 115.



Figure 9. Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (1751–1829), *Penthesilea's Death* (1823), oil on canvas, Schloss Eutin.

'Wuth' ('rage') is used of her. Calling herself the daughter of Mars, she hurls defiance at Achilles in a long speech, to which he replies at equal length, daring her to make war against the children of Jupiter. He then kills her stone dead with one throw of a javelin, subsequently mourning and admiring her beautiful corpse, as Tischbein also invites us to do (Fig. 9).

## The death of the Amazon

Guyon is convinced that Amazons really existed, writes an extremely long preface to prove that they did, and then conveys, by means of his vivid portrayal, a sense of the Amazons as living, breathing beings. The two last works to be considered in this chapter—Christian Felix Weiße's *Amazonen-Lieder* (1762) and Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* (1808)—go out of their way to demonstrate that the Amazon cannot exist (Weiße), and that if she did, it would be disastrous (Kleist).

The year in which Krünitz's translation of Guyon appeared—1763—is also the last year of the Seven Years War between Prussia and Saxony. The poetic cycle *Amazonen-Lieder* ('Songs of an Amazon', 1762) by the Saxon poet, librettist, and later children's author Christian Felix Weiße (1726–1804) must be understood within the context of the war.<sup>71</sup> It is a work that initially sends out contradictory signals. The frontispiece shows a scantily clad woman on a rumpled bed bidding farewell to a Roman soldier, while his regiment is visible through a doorway waiting for him to join them. A quotation from Pope's Homer, 'The Sex is ever to a soldier kind', holds out the promise that this is to be a volume of erotic encounters in which soldiers conquer on the field of love rather than of battle. The preface sends an entirely different signal. Yes, there are Amazons in our day, writes Weiße, a crowd of 'trousered girls' ('gehösete Mädchen') who crowd our cities and the countryside. So are these girls warriors, that is, real Amazons? Apparently all they need their trousers for is to mourn the departure of the regiment and welcome it back with a glad cry. 'Es giebt also Amazonen' ('Amazons do exist'), is Weiße's conclusion, but he does not mean by this actual women warriors. As to the songs, 'es ist auch eine seltsame Zumuthung, daß ein junges rasches Mädchen lieber vom Donner des Geschützes und dem Todte des Vaterlandes als von den süßen Kriegen der Liebe singen soll' ('it is indeed a strange claim that a lively young girl would prefer to sing of the thunder of the cannon and of dying for the fatherland than of the sweet wars of love'). In composing songs about war

<sup>71</sup> Christian Felix Weisse, *Amazonen-Lieder* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1762). It is often claimed that this work first appeared in 1760, with a second augmented edition in 1762. In fact both editions appeared in 1762. See Gerhard Sauder, 'Christian Felix Weiße's "Amazonen-Lieder"', in Wolfgang Adam and Holger Dainat (eds.), 'Krieg ist mein Lied'. *Der Siebenjährige Krieg in den zeitgenössischen Medien* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 193–214.

rather than love a woman is stepping outside her sphere, but this woman is not only young and lively, she is strange ('ein so seltsames Mädchen', 'such a strange girl') to boot. A peculiar play with gender roles is going on here. The author claims that there are numerous women out there dressed as men, whom he cuts down to size by calling them 'girls' and by applying the label 'strange' to them, and then he reduces them further by limiting their actions to ones which are wholly distant from those of an Amazon. But Weiße is also indulging in ventriloquism. The poems that follow purport to be those of a woman, but they are by a man speaking through her, using her persona to express his ideas about war, the role that women play within it, and how they should relate to the men who are the real warriors.

The augmented collection is a cycle of thirteen substantial poems, each with an epigraph from Horace, and the collection is followed by a translation of war poems by the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, so that the work ends with a male voice. There is a kind of loose plot. It opens with the Amazon's farewell to her beloved at the start of the campaign. Full of pride, she urges him off to battle, 'zum Helden Ruhme' ('to a hero's glory').<sup>72</sup> Honour is her rival, but she sends him gladly to that rival. Then, as she sits alone in nature thinking of her beloved, she receives her first letter from him containing his picture. It is the picture of a hero. He is an Achilles, and he writes to tell her of victory. In the third song she laments the distant sound of battle and tries to picture Eriny, the angry goddess, waving her bloody banner aloft, and she fears for her beloved, sensing the violence of the conflict. In the next song, however, she is able to welcome him home with 'Wollust' ('voluptuous joy'), a very hero, bronzed from the campaign with the smell of gunpowder in his hair. He gives her a gold band taken from a captured banner. She kisses his wounds, each one a badge of honour. The fifth song is actually entitled 'Die Amazone entschließt sich ihrem Geliebten auf dem Feldzuge zu folgen' ('the Amazon decides to follow her beloved on campaign').<sup>73</sup> Gerhard Sauder is one of those who read this poem as an account of how, when the soldier returns to the battlefield, the Amazon actually follows in his footsteps, treading the path he has trodden, and how, when she reaches him on the battlefield and sees him under attack, she draws her sword against the enemy.<sup>74</sup> A more plausible reading, given the constraints on women's behaviour in the period, is that this is an unreal scene that she

<sup>72</sup> Weiße, *Amazonen-Lieder*, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>74</sup> Sauder, 'Christian Felix Weiße's "Amazonen-Lieder"', 212.

is playing out in her head. Stanza 13, for instance, describes how, when Hector sets off for war, the babe at the breast cries out to touch the feathers on his father's helmet. The impossibility of the baby joining the hero on the battlefield creates the context for the impossibility of the female speaker doing likewise.<sup>75</sup> She imagines how it would be to defend her beloved, to draw the sword on his behalf (stanza 18), and to strike the enemy: 'Fühl einen jungfräulichen Arm!' ('Feel a virgin's arm!'), she exclaims.<sup>76</sup> When she imagines him trying to send her back, she demands in stanza 24:

Auf! Gebt mir Degen, Helm und Pferd!  
Ich glüh von edlem Zorn:  
Es fühl der Feind mein rüstig Schwerd,  
So wie mein Roß den Sporn.<sup>77</sup>

Oh give me the sword, helmet, and steed! I burn with noble anger. Let the enemy feel my doughty sword, as my steed feels my spur.

In the next song, however, she is looking on, describing the imagined scene as battle commences, and how she sees him in the lines. She trembles for his safety, but calls for him to be struck down by lightning when it seems that he is in retreat. She rejoices at the rout of the enemy, and at a victory cannonade, and weeps with shame when her side is defeated. She thinks he is dead and falls down in a faint. She comes round, however, to find that he is merely wounded. The eleventh song is a hymn of praise to her beloved's horse, while the last two consist of her lament when her lover is killed, and her tears over his grave. She has sacrificed him to the Fatherland, and he is a hero. She wants her soul to leave her woman's body and enter into his, so that she can avenge his death:

Entriß itzt meine Seele sich  
Dem weiblichen Gebein  
Und stürzt in Deinen Leichnam sich,  
Um groß wie Du zu seyn!

Wie wollt ich dann mit tapfrer Hand  
Ihn zehnfach rächen, Ah!

<sup>75</sup> In his review of the cycle, Herder, unlike Sauder, maintained that the female speaker did not actually fight. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Pross. vol. 1: *Herder und der Sturm und Drang 1764–1774* (Munich–Vienna: Hanser, 1984), 301.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 49.

Und für Dich kämpfen, Vaterland!  
 Und für dich bluten, ja,  
 Und für Dich sterben. Welch ein Tod  
 Ach! für das Vaterland  
 Zu sterben, welch ein stolzer Tod  
 Für Dich, O Vaterland!<sup>78</sup>

If my soul now tore itself from its female bones and leapt into your corpse in order to be great like you, how I would then avenge it ten times over with a fearless hand, oh, and fight for you, Fatherland! And bleed for you, yes, and die for you. What a death, oh, to die for the Fatherland, what a proud death for you, O Fatherland!

A pyramid of the enemies' skulls should be erected as a monument and surrounded with a grove of laurels.

There is an extraordinary anticipation here of the nineteenth-century cult of the hero, of military glory, and death on the battlefield. The Amazon only imagines herself fighting, and the rest of the time she is an onlooker, urging her man to kill or die. She is not so much an Amazon warrior as a Spartan woman, telling her man to come home either with his shield or on it. The immediacy of the poems, written in the present tense and depicting the battlefield almost in the manner of a war reporter, makes for extremely effective and emotionally intense war propaganda. Prussians and Saxons are not mentioned, but the Saxon Weiße is clearly urging the annihilation of the Prussians and the victory of his own side. Johannes Birgfeld addresses the question of why Weiße did not put these poems into the mouth of a soldier on the lines of Johann Ludwig Gleim's *Grenadierslieder* (1758), another cycle of poems in which Gleim (1719–1803) glorifies war and Frederick II of Prussia, the aggressor in this conflict.<sup>79</sup> Birgfeld convincingly interprets Weiße's use of the Amazon motif as dictated by the fact that the Saxons did not have their own army. Saxony was invaded and defeated by the Prussians at the very beginning of the Seven Years War and Saxon soldiers were forced to fight for Prussia. Many deserted and joined the Austrian army. So Saxons were fighting on both sides against each other, and Saxony could not claim any victories as its own. Weiße uses the trope of the Amazons to create a particular kind of war propaganda because the usual nationalistic one is not open to him here. Patriotic fervour is expressed not out of the mouth of a soldier but indirectly through his bride—love of a woman for her heroic man is combined with love of Fatherland.

<sup>78</sup> Herder, *Werke* 149.

<sup>79</sup> Johannes Birgfeld, 'Krieg und Aufklärung', Ph.D. thesis (2009).

Another collection, also entitled *Amazonen-Lieder*, by the vastly less talented Karl Christian Reckert (1739–1800), need not detain us for long. It consists of twenty-three poems, of which sixteen are spoken by the Amazon and seven by the so-called hero. The cover depicts a classical helmeted female figure, an Athena, with a long spear, while the first page is decorated with a depiction of a woman wearing an officer's coat, lace jabot, and queue but with a jutting bust, tiny waist, and wide, loose trousers halfway up her calves. Neat little boots complete her outfit. In her hand she holds a sabre and she is surrounded by drums, banners, and cannonballs. The sentiments relating to death or glory are the same as in Weiße's poem cycle, many of the same events are dealt with—the farewell, the injured beloved, victory—but there is not such a clear progression of events as in Weiße, nor is there any suggestion that Reckert's Amazon goes anywhere near a battlefield, notwithstanding the depiction mentioned above. She is a 'Heldenbraut' ('a hero's bride'), not a 'Heldin' ('heroine') herself. Even more than in the Weiße cycle, she fulfils the classic female roles of waving her man off to war, welcoming him back, tending his wounds, and mourning his death. There can be no such thing in this imaginative world as a woman who really bears arms and defends her country.

One could not think of a work more different from Reckert's *Amazonen-Lieder* than Heinrich von Kleist's blank-verse tragedy *Penthesilea*, completed in 1807 and published in 1808. It picks up where Guyon (and Krünitz) left off, taking the heroic figure of Penthesilea encountered in *Geschichte der Amazonen* and bearing her off into a world of madness and chaos. The whole play is, in the words of Gabriele Brandstetter, a drama of transgression against the cultural order.<sup>80</sup> In *Penthesilea* Kleist shows us a crazed being who, first in the eyes of the Greeks and then when she appears herself, behaves irrationally and egotistically. The word 'Wut' ('rage') in various forms is used to describe Penthesilea's behaviour six times in the first two scenes, and she herself is called a she-wolf. Kleist, horrified by the potential for women's emancipation unleashed by the French Revolution—something that for him ran counter to women's destiny or 'Bestimmung'—demonstrates that such emancipation must necessarily lead to perversity and violence.<sup>81</sup> In her

<sup>80</sup> Gabriele Brandstetter, 'Penthesilea, "Das Wort des Greuelrätsels". Die Überschreitung der Tragödie', in Walter Hinderer (ed.), *Kleists Dramen. Interpretationen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), 75–115, 75.

<sup>81</sup> Inge Stephan, '"Da werden Weiber zu Hyänen...". Amazonen und Amazonenmythen bei Schiller und Kleist', in Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Feministische Literaturwissenschaft. Dokumentation der Tagung in Hamburg vom Mai 1983* (Berlin: Argument-Verlag, 1984), 23–42.

discussion of Amazons in the work of Schiller and Kleist, Inge Stephan quotes Schiller's lines on the French Revolution in his 'Lied von der Glocke' ('Song of the Bell', 1797–9) to illustrate his fear of the same thing:

Freiheit und Gleichheit! Hört man schallen,  
Der ruhge Bürger greift zur Wehr,  
Die Straßen füllen sich, die Hallen,  
Und Würgerbanden ziehn umher,  
Da werden Weiber zu Hyänen,  
Und treiben mit Entsetzen Scherz,  
Noch zuckend, mit des Panthers Zähnen,  
Zerreißen sie des Feindes Herz.<sup>82</sup>

Freedom and equality one hears ring out, the quiet citizen takes up his weapon, the streets and halls fill up and gangs of murderers roam. Then women become hyenas and make light of horror, with the teeth of the panther they tear the enemy's heart while it is still beating.

A woman who decides to be a warrior will of necessity reveal herself as a monster, a wild animal. Kleist's Penthesilea is not a heroic warrior queen who is killed, and then mourned, by Achilles. She is a crazed, irrational, and barbaric creature who turns on her own companions at the drop of a hat, has her dogs tear the unarmed Achilles to pieces, and then sinks her teeth into his dying flesh. In contradiction of the myth, the woman is the killer here—though this does not make her the victor—and the man is the victim. The play, as Michel Chaouli has pointed out, is in—and is about—bad taste.<sup>83</sup> Torn flesh is at the heart of it, both the ripped-off breast which is the founding act of the Amazon nation (ll. 1985–9), and Achilles' torn flesh.<sup>84</sup> The action takes place amidst a world at war, in which three armies, those of the Greeks, the Trojans, and the Amazons, whirl across the landscape and clash violently. The whole play is steeped in violence. The first proper speech, Odysseus' reply to Antilochus' greeting, describes the Greek and Amazon armies 'like angry wolves', sinking their teeth into each other's throats when they engage on the battlefield. Later on, after Penthesilea has

<sup>82</sup> Friedrich Schiller, 'Das Lied von der Glocke', Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: *Deutsche Literatur von Lessing bis Kafka* (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 145714–31.

<sup>83</sup> Michel Chaouli, 'Devouring Metaphor: Disgust and Taste in Kleist's *Penthesilea*', *German Quarterly*, 69 (1996), 125–43.

<sup>84</sup> See Matthew Pollard, 'Reading and Writing the Architecture of the Body in Kleist's *Penthesilea*', in Marianne Henn and Holger A. Pausch (eds.), *Body Dialetics in the Age of Goethe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 365–91, and ch. 7 of Simon Richter, *Missing the Breast*.

helped her own dogs to tear the man she desires into shreds, like a Maenad or a Fury—Euripides' *Bacchae* is one of Kleist's sources—she remarks that the German words for bites and kisses rhyme ('Küsse, Bisse, / Das reimt sich').<sup>85</sup> She has already described her own desires as unleashed dogs ('Begierden, wie losgeläßne Hunde'),<sup>86</sup> and it is they that bring about the catastrophe.

This fascinating and repellent play begins with the act of men looking at women (Fig. 10). The first fifth of it takes place in the Greek camp, so the audience sees everything at first from the Greek male perspective.<sup>87</sup> Penthesilea appears to us first through the male gaze, specifically that of Odysseus, who describes her almost as a zombie ('von Ausdruck leer, / Als ob in Stein gehaun', 'empty of expression, as though hewn in stone'),<sup>88</sup> and then as a woman suddenly flooded with erotic desire for Achilles. Achilles too is described through others' eyes, but in association with Apollo, with light, and with the rising sun. Penthesilea, on the other hand, is the thunderbolt coming out of a cloud of dust, and the Amazons are generally linked with dust, darkness, and night and, through this, with unreason.

But Kleist does not just show Penthesilea as a transgressive figure whose final act of unreason is to will herself to death. He also shows her to be a bad Amazon and a bad leader, who only has to be physically attracted to a man to be prepared to act against the interests of her own people, and who rejects her own companions in search of her own satisfaction. Sisterhood is a mirage in this play, thus demonstrating that for this, if for no other reason, an all-woman state would not work. Penthesilea, according to the myth, is the woman who kills her own sister Hippolyta in a hunting accident. This Penthesilea also behaves unreasonably and aggressively towards Prothoe, the wise older Amazon who is both mother and sister to her, especially during the last painful scene. Previously we have seen how Penthesilea has trodden three Amazons into the dust on her quest for Achilles (l. 2556), just as she has aggressively refused to celebrate victory in the fifth scene, since it has not

<sup>85</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea*, in *Dramen Zweiter Teil* (Munich: dtv, 1964), pp. 161–258, ll. 2981–2.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., l. 1219.

<sup>87</sup> Renée M. Schell, 'The Amazon Body: Wartime Sexuality and Female Subjectivity in Kleist's *Penthesilea*', in Hillary Collier Sy-Quia and Susanne Baackmann (eds.), *Conquering Women: Women and War in the German Cultural Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 126–42.

<sup>88</sup> Kleist, *Penthesilea*, ll. 64–5.



Figure 10. Frank von Stuck (1863–1928), *Wounded Amazon* (1905), oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam—a more extreme example of the male gaze.

brought her Achilles as a captive. Instead of leading her people safely home, she wants to get her way or condemn them all to death: ‘Rosen für die Scheitel unsrer Helden / Oder Zypressen für die unsrigen’ (‘rose [wreaths] for the heads of our heroes or cypresses for our own’).<sup>89</sup> When the only way to be united with Achilles is to follow him into death, she releases herself from the Amazon law (‘Ich sage vom Gesetz der Fraun mich los’).<sup>90</sup> Women should not feel, still less act upon, desire, for it will send them off the rails; they should not fight or kill, and they are incapable of forming a polity, simply because they are women.

<sup>89</sup> Kleist, *Penthesilea*, ll. 879–80.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., l. 3012. This conflict between the woman and the Amazon, as well as between the Amazon and the Greek, is brilliantly conveyed musically by Othmar Schoeck (1886–1957) in his one-act opera *Penthesilea* (1927, rev. 1928). Schoeck sets about a quarter of Kleist’s text to music. See Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, ‘Das “Wesentliche des Kleist’schen Dramas?” Zur musikdramatischen Konzeption von Othmar Schoecks Operneinakter “Penthesilea”’, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 59 (2002), 267–97.

Ruth Angress, writing in 1982, argues in a famous article that Kleist in no way invalidates or calls into question the Amazon state. She writes that ‘Penthesilea is surrounded by the well-integrated members of an albeit unusual community’,<sup>91</sup> and that ‘the Amazon state remains intact at the end’.<sup>92</sup> Hilda M. Brown disagrees completely. In Brown’s view—one which I share—there is ‘constant emphasis on the contradiction and paradox which accompanies all manifestations of [the] practices and strategies’ of the Amazon state.<sup>93</sup> Kleist shows that the method the women use to choose a mate is unworkable, argues Brown, and that the Amazon state ‘has become a liability to its members . . . ossified around an unworkable policy which is encoded and rigidly maintained by religious ritual, promoted by hard-liners’.<sup>94</sup> If we agree with this assessment, then Kleist not only shows that women, let off the leash, will turn into wild dogs, but that a female state cannot work.

The study that formed most educated Germans’ notions about ancient myth from 1838, the year it appeared, until at least the 1950s and 1960s deals a further death-blow both to the heroic figure of Penthesilea herself and to the notion of the Amazon state. This work is Gustav Schwab’s *Sagen des klassischen Altertums* (‘Legends of Classical Antiquity’).<sup>95</sup> Schwab provides a deliberately popularizing and readable but emotionally loaded account. The lengthy chapter relating Penthesilea’s death sets her up at the beginning as a sort of Judith figure—the fearless individual woman who shows the timorous men (the Trojans) how to fight their enemies (the Greeks). She combines in her person the terrible with the delightful, girlish grace with martial ardour—an echo of the description of Schiller’s Joan of Arc as ‘schön zugleich und schrecklich’ (‘simultaneously beautiful and terrible’). Once safely dead—killed by Achilles—Penthesilea can be admired, and Achilles can be shown as susceptible to the beauty of the dead warrior woman.<sup>96</sup> Schwab also conveys the idea of irrational, animalistic violence that we see

<sup>91</sup> See Ruth Angress, ‘Kleist’s Nation of Amazons’, in Susan L. Cocalis and Kay Goodman (eds.), *Beyond the Eternal Feminine: Critical Essays on Women and German Literature* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), 99–134, 117.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>93</sup> Hilda M. Brown, *Heinrich von Kleist: The Ambiguity of Art and the Necessity of Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 312–15, 312.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 313–14.

<sup>95</sup> Gustav Schwab, *Die schönsten Sagen des klassischen Altertums*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: S. G. Liesching, 1838–40).

<sup>96</sup> See Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992).

in Kleist by describing Penthesilea as a lioness or a panther, and by using the verb 'morden' ('to murder' or 'massacre') instead of the more neutral 'töten' ('to kill') to describe her actions on the battlefield. But his final touch is to have Penthesilea being directed by her own father, the god Mars, in her sleep. It is Mars who urges her to commence battle with the Greeks at a time of his choosing, rather than her exercising her own judgement as a military commander. Just as in the accounts of the Judith story and those of such heroic maidens as Eleonore Prochaska, the Amazon queen has been turned into a puppet.<sup>97</sup>

In 1974 the GDR dramatist Stefan Schütz (b.1944) wrote a play called *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)* which dramatizes the story of the taming of the Amazon queen Antiope.<sup>98</sup> Schütz divides his play into ten scenes, with the first presenting Herakles and Theseus near the Amazon city of Themiskyra. Herakles has come to capture Antiope's armour as the ninth of his ten labours. Schütz invents a particular kind of heightened prose to distance and make strange this ancient world, providing Herakles with his own brand of violent and fractured speech. Though a demigod, Herakles is primitive, brutal, power-hungry, and drunken. For him the Amazons are wild animals to be hunted down. Theseus is much the more wily and intelligent of the two. The second scene takes us to the Amazon headquarters, where we see that the Amazons are just as fierce and that Antiope despises men almost as much as the Greeks despise women: 'Diese Penisbrut, Muskeln nur und After, und der Kopf ist eine Kläranlage' ('This brood of penises, all muscles and arse, and their heads are sewage treatment plants').<sup>99</sup> When battle commences—the Greeks have outsmarted the Amazons—she is captured by Theseus, who is instantly attracted to her and who gives the soldiers all the booty he has captured if he can have Antiope.

Back in Athens, Theseus and Antiope fall deeply and erotically in love with each other, though Antiope is torn between this love and her Amazon

<sup>97</sup> The final indignity is the presentation of naked Amazons on horseback in Nymphenburg in the Nazi festivities known as 'The Night of the Amazons' ('Nacht der Amazonen'). These festivities were attended by the Nazi top brass in 1936, 1937, and 1938 and were organized by Christian Weber. See Stefan Schweizer, 'Unserer Weltschauung sichtbaren Ausdruck geben.' *Nationalsozialistische Geschichtsbilder in historischen Festzügen* (Göttingen: Wallstein 2007), and Herbert Rosendorfer, *Die Nacht der Amazonen* (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1989).

<sup>98</sup> Stefan Schütz, *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)*, in *Eloisa und Abaelard* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1979), 7–56.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 17.

nature. The people of Athens are unhappy with Theseus' fascination with Antiope, whom he wants to see treated as his queen. The Athenians want Theseus to marry Phaidra, to cement an alliance with her father, the king of Crete. Meanwhile, the Amazons have made an alliance with the Scyths in order to march on Athens and recapture Antiope, while the Scyths plan to betray the Amazons and take Athens themselves. Though torn between her Amazon nature and the physical and emotional satisfaction she gets from her relationship with Theseus, Antiope is determined to stay in Athens. She therefore tries to make peace between Amazons and Greeks, since a war to recapture her is pointless. When Oreithyia, now queen of the Amazons, meets her, she cannot believe that Antiope wishes to remain in Athens of her own accord. Antiope is thoroughly tamed and even wishes to become Theseus's legal wife. He declares their love to be above such legalistic measures and decides to marry Phaidra. Antiope, riven with jealousy and sorrow, appears at his wedding banquet, sword in hand, and challenges him to single combat. In the course of the fight she deliberately runs onto his sword and dies in his arms, whereupon he carries on with his wedding feast. This play, therefore, for all its theatrical and linguistic liveliness, provides another example of the sexual taming to which the warrior woman must be subjected, as well as of the usual self-immolation which the warrior woman must perform.

# Many Ways To Die: Women Warriors and National Myth

Just as the Greeks imagine the overcoming of the Amazons as an essential stage on their path towards proper patriarchal rule, so do the Germans, and they do this by rethinking the mythology and history of the Slavs, some of whose territories were still under German hegemony up to the middle of the nineteenth century. In the Slav myths, transmitted by medieval and early modern historians, the warrior maiden Wlasta (also called Wlastislawa or Valasca), one of the companions of Libussa, an early ruler of Bohemia, sets up a violent Amazon society. Wanda, a warrior queen, is an early ruler of what is now Western Poland. In treatments of this material in German literature Wlasta, Wanda, and sometimes Libussa have to die, so that patriarchy can function successfully.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries German literature also sees an increasing engagement with Germanic and Nordic myth, transmitted through the medieval epic *Das Nibelungenlied* ('The Saga of the Nibelungs'), and through older Norse and Icelandic sources such as the *Edda* and the *Volsunga Saga* ('The Saga of the Volsungs'). Though the hero Sigurd or Siegfried is a central figure in re-imaginings of this material, the figure of Brünhild,<sup>1</sup> who is either a Valkyrie or the queen of Iceland, depending on the source used, becomes increasingly important during the nineteenth century.

Apart from Karoline von Woltmann's story about the Bohemian Amazons, *Der Mädchenkrieg* ('The Maidens' War', 1815), all the works discussed here are plays and operas. Their most striking feature is the death of the woman

<sup>1</sup> Brünhild's name takes many different forms from author to author and from source to source: Brunhild, Brünhild, Brynhildis, Brünnhilde. The standard form Brünhild will be used to refer to the figure in general, the specific spelling when referring to the usage in a particular work.

warrior or ruler, accomplished by a range of methods. These women are brought on stage, it seems, in order to be annihilated or, best of all, in order to annihilate themselves. Wanda, the eponymous heroine of Zacharias Werner's *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* ('Wanda, Queen of the Sarmatians', 1808), and Libussa in Franz Grillparzer's *Libussa* (1848) bring about their own deaths, while Wlasta in Clemens Brentano's *Die Gründung Prags* ('The Founding of Prague', 1814) is killed in battle. Just as Wanda's death is the spectacular high point of Werner's play, so Brünhild's death is usually the spectacular high point of the works in which she figures, and this in spite of the fact that she does not die at all in the *Nibelungenlied* but simply fades out of the story. In Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Der Held des Nordens* ('The Hero of the North', 1810), Ernst Raupach's *Der Nibelungen-Hort* ('The Treasure of the Nibelungs', 1828), Emanuel Geibel's *Brünhild* (1857), Richard Wagner's *Der Ring der Nibelungen* ('The Ring of the Nibelungs', 1856–76), and Paul Ernst's *Brünhild* (1909) Brünhild kills herself by stabbing, drowning, or burning herself to death, and sometimes by a combination of these methods. Only in Friedrich Hebbel's *Die Nibelungen* ('The Nibelungs', 1861/2) does Brünhild, as in the source text, remain alive, though Hebbel makes her into a necrophilic vampire instead.

Though more or less all the women are killed, there is a distinction in the way they are presented. The Slav women—Libussa, Wlasta, and Wanda—are depicted as rulers and/or warriors and raise questions about gender roles, governance, and war. Because they are women, an important feature of the plot is how their emotions affect their actions, but their identity as queens and warriors is the reason they are being depicted in the first place. Not so with Brünhild. She is indeed a warrior, either a Valkyrie or the queen of Iceland, but what she represents in all the plays in which she appears is emotionality. It is her feelings of compassion, love, hurt, and grief that drive her actions and the plot, and, while it is certainly not irrelevant that she is a warrior, nineteenth-century German plays do not show her using a weapon and killing in the way that, for instance, Werner's Wanda does. Brünhild's emotionality is also heightened and extended by the figure of Kriemhild (also called Gutrunne and variants thereof) who, in several dramas, carries on the representation of the emotions after Brünhild's death and seems to take on some of her characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Tischel points this out in her *Tragödie der Geschlechter. Studien zur Dramatik Friedrich Hebbels* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002), 152.

## Slav warrior women: the sources

When Justus Georg Schottelius (1612–76), scholar, lawyer, writer, and tutor to the Braunschweig-Lüneburg princes, published his *Ethica* ('Ethics') in 1669, he included a short chapter on heroic virtue, 'Von der HeldenTugend'. He defines this as an exceptional quality that can only be achieved with God's help:

Die Heldentugend wird nicht so sehr durch menschlichen Fleiß / Bemühung und Sorgfalt / als durch sonderbaren göttlichen Beistand und Erleuchtung erlanget / daher sie auch eine fast überirdische und halb göttliche Tugend genant wird.<sup>3</sup>

Heroic virtue is not so much achieved by human industry, effort and care but by means of special divine support and divine inspiration,<sup>4</sup> for which reason it is designated an almost supernatural and semi-divine virtue.

His male examples include Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Cyrus, while his female examples consist of the following six women: the Hebrew Judith, the Persian Semiramis, the Polish Wanda, the Danish Margaret, the Bohemian Libussa, and the English Elizabeth. Among these superhuman and divinely inspired women, therefore, are two Slav figures, Wanda and Libussa, whom Schottelius expects to be as familiar to his readers as Elizabeth I of England.<sup>5</sup>

The ultimate source for myths about these women is Cosmas of Prague's twelfth-century *Chronica Boemorum* ('Chronicle of the Bohemians'). His history begins in a territory he calls 'Germania', a paradisaical land in which humans live simply, hold property in common, and have no exclusive sexual relationships; rather, men and women lie with each other in a spontaneous and random fashion. One man, Krok (or Croccus), rises up among them as a judge, but he has no sons, so when he dies it falls to one of his three daughters, Kazi, Tetka, and Libussa, to succeed him. Libussa (or Libuše) takes on her father's role as dispenser of justice and turns out to be just and able: 'She was cautious in counsel, quick to speak, chaste in body,

<sup>3</sup> Justus Georg Schottelius, *Ethica die Sittenkunst oder Wollebenskunst / in Teutscher Sprache vernemlich beschrieben in dreyen Büchern Worin zugleich auf alle Capittel lateinische Summaria auch sonst durch und durch die Definitiones lateinisch beygefigt werden* (Wolfenbüttel: Weiß, 1669), ch. 18, Book 3, 585–91, 586.

<sup>4</sup> Schottel is referring here to the divine *afflatus*.

<sup>5</sup> On the seventeenth-century understanding of heroic virtue, see Martin Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus: Konzeptionen 'politischer' Größe in Literatur und Traktatistik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 83–157.

upright in character, second to no one in resolving the lawsuits of the people. Affable, even lovable, in all things, she adorned and glorified the feminine sex while handling masculine affairs with foresight.<sup>6</sup> As Patrick Geary points out, Libussa is described here in terms reminiscent of such female judges in the Bible as Deborah.<sup>7</sup> She refuses to rule by force, as a man would, but this is what her people want. Indeed, they want to be ruled by a man, so she tells them that they will find their ruler by going to a village where they will find a man ploughing with an ox. His name is Primislaus (or Přemysl). Libussa and Primislaus mate and together found the city of Prague, whose name comes from the Czech word for threshold. As Geary notes, Cosmas is ambivalent about Libussa, praising her virtue and ability as a judge and calling her 'Prince Libuše' at one point,<sup>8</sup> but disparaging what he calls her wanton softness at another, a softness which, according to him, is typical of women who do not have a man to fear.<sup>9</sup> Libussa is also a 'phitonissa', a seer, and Cosmas compares her and her sisters to the Furies, while all three sisters have magic powers of divination and healing. In spite of these negative associations, Cosmas's Libussa is a woman with authority who, even after she marries Primislaus, continues to rule at his side.

Then Cosmas describes a different kind of Bohemian woman, a group of fearless Bohemian warrior maidens. They live together in an alternative society, making war and taking men if and when they need them, and they establish their own city which they call Devin (often spelled Diewin in German). This Amazon polity is brought to an end when the young Bohemian men are invited to a feast during a pause in the hostilities between them and the women. The men seize their opportunity, carry the women off, rape them, and subsequently marry them. Devin is then destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Just as the Amazons function as part of the origin myth of the Greeks as warrior maidens who have to be vanquished before patriarchy can be instituted, so these Bohemian warrior women function in the same way as part of the origin myth of the Germans, who are the overlords of the Bohemians at the time that Cosmas is writing. Czech nationalists take up these figures in the nineteenth century as part of their own national myths, just as the Poles do with Wanda, who is discussed below.

<sup>6</sup> Cosmas of Prague, *Chronica Boemorum* (*The Chronicle of the Czechs*), tr. Lisa Wolverton (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 2008), 40.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Geary, *Women at the Beginning: Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 38.

<sup>8</sup> Wolverton, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 40.

Where Cosmas relates the existence and behaviour of the Bohemian Amazons in a factual, indeed neutral, tone, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II, 1455–64) is much more uneasy about them. In his *De ortu et historia Bohemorum* ('Of the Origin and History of the Bohemians'),<sup>11</sup> written around the middle of the fifteenth century, he too tells the story of Croccus, Libussa, and Primislaus. He too is able to conceive of a woman as ruler, and says that, after Libussa and Primislaus have married, Libussa continued to rule with her husband by her side. He too relates the doings of a group of Bohemian warrior maidens whose way of life and behaviour appal him, devoting twice the space in his text to their story that he accords to that of Libussa and Primislaus.<sup>12</sup> These Amazons are led by the rebellious Valasca. She is monstrous, a sorceress, sexually promiscuous, and blood-thirsty, and women like her are a bad example to contemporary women. So Piccolomini, like Cosmas, judges Libussa, the lawgiver, and Valasca, the warrior woman, differently. It is the latter, rather than the former, who has to be defeated before the history of the Bohemian people can truly begin.

Cyriacus Spangenberg makes a similar distinction. His comprehensive account of warrior women of all ages and all nations in his *AdelsSpiegel* ('Mirror of Nobility', 1591) has already been discussed in connection with the Amazons.<sup>13</sup> He devotes a full chapter to what he calls Slav or Wendish warrior women, citing Piccolomini as his only source. Spangenberg calls Libussa 'eine hochverstendige kluge Jungfrau'<sup>14</sup> ('a highly intelligent, clever maiden') who ruled well and who, though she was forced to take a husband because her people refused any longer to be subject to governance by women, continues to rule after her marriage to Primislaus, who, 'So lang Libussa gelebt / nur den namen eines Hertzogen gehabt / sie aber das Regiment gefüret' ('who, while Libussa was alive, was only a lord in name, and she governed').<sup>15</sup> Spangenberg calls Valasca, on the other hand, 'diese rumorische Vettel' ('this rebellious hag'),<sup>16</sup> and depicts her again as monstrous. She was the most courageous and resolute of Libussa's maidens, he tells us, but she was extremely chagrined that, on Libussa's death,

<sup>11</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica* (Cologne: Gotthard Hittorp, 1532).

<sup>12</sup> See Christine Reinle's comprehensive article, 'Exempla weiblicher Stärke? Zu den Ausprägungen des mittelalterlichen Amazonenbildes', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), 1–38.

<sup>13</sup> Cyriacus Spangenberg, *AdelsSpiegel. Historischer Ausführlicher Bericht: Was Adel sey vnd heisse / Woher er komme / Wie mancherley er sey / Vnd Was denselben ziere und erhalte / auch hingegen verstelle und schwäche. Desgleichen von allen Göttlichen/ Geistlichen und weltlichen Ständen auf Erden &c. Wie solches alles der Innhalt nach der Vorrede namhaftig und in der ordnung zeigt. Dem ganzen Deutschen Adel zu besondem Ehren / aus etlich hundert Authorn mit großer mühe und auff fleißigste bechrieben. Durch M. Cyriacum Spangenberg. Gedruckt zu Schmalkalden / bey Michel Schmück* (Schmalkalden: Michel Schmück, 1591).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 459b.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

the governance of the state was to be handed over to men. Therefore she secretly plotted against Libussa and gathered other wrong-headed women round her with the aim of taking the reins of power into her own hands. When Libussa died, Valasca's following grew. Her way of life and that of her followers was aided by the Bohemian custom of encouraging girls from childhood on to ride, run, jump, use weapons, and hunt. Valasca also gave her women a magic potion so that they would not be susceptible to men. Spangenberg, still following Piccolomini, then relates the numerous perverse and evil deeds of Valasca and her followers and of Primislaus' victory over her in the battle in which she is killed.

Spangenberg also tells the story of the Polish warrior women led by Venda (called Wanda in other sources), the beautiful daughter of the Polish prince Cracus (also called Crocus), the mythical founder of Cracow. She is made her father's successor, in the expectation that she will marry a powerful prince. The German lord Rüdiger falls violently in love with her, but she rejects him. He then reappears with a large army and is rejected again, and his own forces are not prepared to go to war for Rüdiger's personal reasons. Rüdiger kills himself, and his army makes peace with Venda. But instead of ruling her territory in an alliance with the Germans, she sacrifices herself to the gods, jumping off a bridge into the Weichsel, the river running through Cracow.<sup>17</sup>

Two other important early modern sources on Bohemian history are Johannes Dubravius' (or Jan Skála Dubravius') *Historica Bohemica* ('Bohemian History', 1552) and Václav (or Wenceslaus) Hájek's *Kronyka Czeska* ('Bohemian Chronicle', 1541),<sup>18</sup> neither of which Spangenberg appears to have known, though his account is often close to that of Hájek. That Dubravius' history was in Latin made it accessible to a non-Czech learned public from the beginning and was reprinted in various versions at regular intervals, for instance in 1575, 1602, 1671, and 1687. Hájek's chronicle was originally in Czech with a Latin dedication to the emperor, but became more widely available through four German translations, beginning with

<sup>17</sup> Spangenberg's source for this tale is Martinus Cromerus' *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX*. It is impossible to know which edition he used, but Oporin in Basel printed it in 1555, 1558, and 1568 and Mylius in Cologne did so in 1589.

<sup>18</sup> Wenzelaus Hájek or Václav Hájek z Libočan, *Kronyka Czeská* (Prague: Severýn, Kuběš, 1541), and Jan Skála Dubravius (Johannes Dubravius), *Historia Regni Boiemiae, de rebus memoria dignis, in illa gestis, ab initio Boiemorum, qui ex Illyria venientes, eandem Boiemiam, in medio propemodum superioris Germaniae sitam, occupaverunt* (Prostějov: Io. Gunther, 1552) and Jo. Dubravius *Historia Bohemica ab origine gentis, per diversas temporum et familiarium vices, usque ad Ferdinandi Imp. Et Regis auspicia, deducta a d. v. Thoma Jordano . . . novis genealogiarum . . . catalogis . . . illustrata exhortatoria . . .* (Hanoviae: n.pub., 1602).

the first in 1596<sup>19</sup> and followed by others in 1621, 1697, and 1718, culminating in a Latin translation published in the 1760s. For many later German writers—for instance, Clemens Brentano and Karoline von Woltmann—Hájek was the most important source.

Hájek's account of Wlastislawa or Wlasta is the most condemnatory of all, related with great vigour and in considerable detail. He does say that Wlastislawa assembled her troupe of women warriors because of the lack of respect shown them by Primislaus after Libussa's death, but he depicts her as an unfeeling monster from the beginning. Her coming to power means an inversion of the social and natural order, whereby the authority of the husband is negated and men fear so much to be stabbed to death in their beds that they take to sleeping in the woods. The women are cunning and use their beauty to lure the men to their doom, and their deeds are so heinous as to be devilish. When Wlastislawa has Ctirad, the nobleman sent against her by Primislaus, broken on the wheel, Hájek comments: 'Und vielleicht hat diese schändtliche that / auch den Teuffeln wohlgefallen' ('And perhaps this appalling deed pleased even the devils').<sup>20</sup> Hájek describes the final defeat of Wlastislawa and her women in the same horrifying and brutal detail that we are accustomed to reading with regard to modern genocidal wars. In the last battle the men storm Diewin, the women's fortress, kill, massacre and rape the women: 'und nach verbrachter Kurtzweile / warff man sie vom Schloß aus den Fenstern hinab in die Gräben / begruben auch keine / sondern liessen sie daselbst die Raben und Hunde fressen' ('after they had taken their pleasure, they threw them out of the windows of the castle into the ditch, did not bury any of them but let them be eaten by the crows and dogs').<sup>21</sup> The raped women become carrion, and in this way order is restored in the state.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Wenceslaus Hájek, *Böhmischa Chronica Wenceslai Hagecii: Von Visprung der Böhmen von irer Hertzogen vnd Konige Graffen Adels vnd Geschlechter Ankunft, von ihren löblichen Ritterlichen Thaten, Jem, von der Städte vnd Schlösser Fundation vnd Anfang, und was sich sonston . . . in 883 Jahren Begeben vnd zuertragen / Jetzt aus Böhmischer in die Deutsche Sprache . . . tranßferiret, und . . . in Druck verfertiget, Durch Johannem Sandel Zlutiensem, jetzo der Königlichen Stadt Cadan in Böhmen Notarium* (Brüx: Weidlich; Prague: Staus, 1596); *Das Ander Teil der Böhmischen Chronica Wenceslai Hagecii / Aus Böhmischer in die Deutsche Sprache mit besondrem fleiß Tranßferieret. Durch Johannem Sandel / Zlutiensem, jetzo der Königlichen Stadt Cadan in Böhmen, Notarium* (Brüx: Weidlich; Prague: Straus, 1596). There are other, later German translations also.

<sup>20</sup> Hájek, *Böhmischa Chronica*, 24a. <sup>21</sup> Ibid. 459b.

<sup>22</sup> The opera *Là Libussa* (music by Clemente Monari, libretto by Flaminio Parisetti), which was performed in Wolfenbüttel in 1692, turns the Libussa legend into a love story with a happy ending, and is therefore not relevant for our discussion.

The Libussa story was popularized for a later reading public by Johann Karl August Musäus (1735–87) in his *Libussa, Königin von Böhmen: ein Volksmärchen* ('Libussa, Queen of Bohemia: A Folk Tale').<sup>23</sup> Note the genre to which Musäus assigns the story: a 'Märchen' is a folk tale or fairy tale, so it is removed from the realm of the historical into the realm of the unreal. Musäus states explicitly that his retelling is based on Dubravius and Piccolomini, and he even includes Latin quotes from them in footnotes, but unlike Dubravius and Piccolomini, who are serious historians, Musäus sets the events in a very vague and distant past, in a never-never version of Bohemia, and among a fairy people:

Tief im Böhmer Walde, wovon jetzt nur ein Schatten übrig ist, wohnte vorzeiten, da er sich noch weit und breit ins Land erstreckte, ein geistiges Völklein, lichtscheu und luftig, auch unkörperlich, feiner genaturnt als die aus fettem Ton geformte Menschheit, und darum unempfindbar dem gröbren Gefühlssinn; aber dem verfeinerten halbsichtbar bei Mondenlicht, und wohlbekannt den Dichtern unter dem Namen der Dryaden, und den alten Barden, unter dem Namen der Elfen.<sup>24</sup>

Deep in the Bohemian forest, of which only a shadow is left, when it still covered the land far and wide, there lived in times gone by an ethereal little people, airy, avoiding the light, incorporeal too, of a finer nature than humankind which is formed out of greasy clay, and therefore insensitive to the coarser emotions; but half visible to the more refined by moonlight and well known to poets as dryads and to the ancient bards elves.

He then devotes a considerable amount of space to the story of how these spirits are gradually driven out of the primeval forest that was their home, but how the young esquire Krok is more in tune with nature and the spirit world than his companions and how he saves an ancient oak tree and marries the dryad whose home it is. This provides Libussa and her sisters with their magic ancestry, something that the historians before him do not mention.

Musäus too, however, is able to accept that Libussa continued to hold the reins of government after her marriage:

Das Reich Böhmen hatte dem Namen nach einen Herzog, aber die Regierung fand sich nach wie vor in der weiblichen Hand. Primislas war ein rechtes Muster eines folgsamen unterwürfigen Ehemahls, der seiner Herzogin weder Hausregiment noch die Landesregierung streitig machte. Seine Gesinnungen und Wünsche

<sup>23</sup> Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, 5 vols. (Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger, 1782–6). Quotations are taken from Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (Munich: Winkler, 1976), 329–91.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 331–2.

sympathisierten so vollkommen mit den ihrigen wie zwei gleichgestimmte Saiten, wovon die unberührte den Ton freiwillig nachhält, den die lautertönende anspricht. Libussa hatte aber auch nicht den stolzen eiteln Sinn der Damen, die für große Partien gelten wollen, und den armen Wicht, dessen Glück sie wähnen gemacht zu haben, in der Folge mit Übermut stets an die Holzschuhe erinnern; sondern sie ahmte der berühmten Palmyrenerin nach, und herrschte wie Zenobia über ihren gutmütigen Odenat vermöge des Übergewichtes ihrer Geistestalente.<sup>25</sup>

The kingdom of Bohemia had a lord in name but the government was in the hand of a woman just as before. Primislaus was the very pattern of an obedient, subservient husband, who did not challenge his lady for either authority at home or governance of the country. His ideas and wishes were as in harmony with hers as if they were two strings tuned to the same note, so that the one that is untouched echoes voluntarily the note that the louder string sounds. But Libussa did not have the proud, vain spirit of those ladies who want to be thought great matrimonial catches and who therefore constantly and arrogantly remind the poor soul whose fortune they think they have made of his clogs; she rather emulated the famous woman of Palmyra and ruled like Zenobia over her good-natured Odenat, thanks to her superior intellectual powers.

Musäus appears to be praising Libussa, but makes clear his own views of Primislaus' obedience by using the contemptuous adjective 'subservient' to describe it. But it was at least possible, up to the 1780s, for a German to conceive of a woman governing and exercising legal authority and doing so well. This is not surprising, given that he and his contemporaries had the example of the empress Maria Theresia (1717–80) before them. After 1800 such an idea becomes inconceivable. The just judge Libussa, the rebellious and bloodthirsty Valasca (or Wlasta or Wlastisawa, as she is variously called), and the beautiful Venda (or Wanda), who sacrifices herself and for whom a knight dies of love, are re-imagined again and again as women who organize their own effacement, who relinquish power, or who immolate themselves. Their stories are used to demonstrate that a powerful woman must be displaced or annihilated before the patriarchal order can be instituted and the nation constituted. Since political power is indissolubly connected to the bearing of arms, military might has to be taken away from women and given to men, who alone are the right people to wield it. This is the inescapable conclusion of the three plays to be discussed next.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* 389.

<sup>26</sup> See Ch. 6 for an account of Valiska, the Bohemian princess and virago who is the heroine of Andreas Bucholtz's novel *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules und der Böhmisichen*

Karoline von Woltmann takes a slightly different view, in particular of male behaviour, but she too assents to the necessary establishment of patriarchal order.

## Slav warrior women in nineteenth-century literature

Clemens Brentano (1778–1843) spent a considerable amount of time in 1810 and 1811 both on his brother's estate at Bukowan near Prague and in the city itself, and he had read the works by Cosmas, Hájek, Dubravius, and Musäus just discussed, so he was steeped in Bohemian historiography and legend. Out of the tale of Libussa and Primislau he fashions a violent, lively, and lengthy play entitled *Die Gründung Prags*,<sup>27</sup> which was intended to be the first work in a trilogy. Part II was to be wholly devoted to the Amazon conflict—what Brentano calls ‘Der Mägdekrieg’ ('the war of the maidens')—and Part III to the coming of Christianity. Parts II and III were never written, but *Die Gründung Prags* contains elements of all three themes.

The first scene, a clearing in the forest during a thunderstorm, reveals a dark, wild, primitive world, represented principally by the sorceress Zwratka. She and her acolytes are contrasted with two Byzantine Christian travellers, Pachta and Trinitas, and one of the themes of the play is the conflict between Zwratka's violent pagan world and the new Christian order. While they pray, Zwratka, in a drugged trance, continually utters wild curses and calls for blood. Zwratka kills Trinitas with an arrow in Act V, just as she is baptizing one of Zwratka's pupils in sorcery, and Trinitas's martyrdom becomes the first step in Bohemia's later conversion to Christianity. The first Act also introduces Zwratka's three warrior daughters, Wlasta, Stratka, and Scharka, a parallel threesome to Libussa and her two sisters Tetka and Kascha, who are part-human, part-spirit, and therefore possessed of supernatural powers of divination and prophecy. Brentano's Libussa, however, is a warrior too, who surrounds herself with a troop of

*Königlichen Fräulein Valiska Wunder-Geschichte In acht Bücher und zweien Teile abgefasset und allen Gott- und Tugendliebenden Seelen zur Christ- und ehrlichen Ergezligkeit ans Licht gestellet* (Braunschweig: Zilliger, 1659/60).

<sup>27</sup> The date on the title-page of the first edition is 1815, but the play was in fact published in 1814. Clemens Brentano, *Die Gründung Prags. Ein historisch-romantisches Drama*, in *Werke*, vol. 4, ed. Friedhelm Kemp (Munich: Hanser, 1966), 526–842.

warrior maidens as her personal bodyguard. So the clear distinction between Libussa the lawgiver and Wlasta (as Valasca is called here) the warrior is not clear-cut. Libussa and Wlasta, as well as Wlasta's sisters Stratka and Scharka, are all Amazons, closely bound by ties of love and comradeship. This makes the subsequent tragedy all the more poignant, for Wlasta falls in love with the ploughman Primislaus, whom destiny has marked out as Libussa's mate. Wlasta also desires Libussa's power, encouraged to lust for it by her mother Zwratka. These twin impossible desires turn Wlasta into a bloodthirsty monster like her mother, and this personality change is further exacerbated when her mother gives her a magic potion in Act IV. As Ritchie Robertson remarks: 'If Zwratka is demonised, Wlasta is medicalised.'<sup>28</sup>

In general, the play depicts continual enmity between men and women. There is no possibility that both sexes can live side by side in equality—one sex has to dominate the other. The women are attacked twice by men who want to rape them—in Act II and again in Act III—and defend themselves ably and ruthlessly. Stratka falls in love and is betrayed, which turns her into a man-hater. Filled with pain and humiliation, she says:

Kein Weib mehr bin ich, jene war ein Weib  
Die schwach vertraute eines Mannes Schwur.  
Versteine, Herz, verwilde, zarter Leib,  
Zerrissen ist mein Band mit der Natur.<sup>29</sup>

I am no longer a woman. That female was a woman who weakly trusted in a man's oath. Turn to stone, O heart, go wild, tender body, my ties with nature are sundered.

Having successfully defended themselves in Act II, the women build a victory monument. Libussa says: 'Dies hier ist Frauenkrieg, dies Mägdekrieg, / Dies Weiberkrieg!' ('This here means women's war, this maidens' war, this wenches' war!').<sup>30</sup> Libussa gives her warrior women, led by Wlasta, the hilltop of Diewin for their fortress, and when we see them there in Act III they are depicted as un-women who have become as uncontrolled as the men, and who ape the drunken and violent behaviour of men. In a lengthy speech, Wlasta rejects motherhood as women's destiny—the burden of the nine months, she calls it, referring to children as parasites—and woman's subordination to man's authority, while Scharka

<sup>28</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, 'On the Threshold of Patriarchy: Brentano, Grillparzer, and the Bohemian Amazons', *German Life and Letters*, 46 (1992), 203–19, at 213.

<sup>29</sup> Brentano, *Prag*, 625.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 626

urges the women to lure the men to their doom by seducing them and Stratka to hunt men down and kill them. The women are ruling but have become as bad as the worst men, and the suggestion is that this is what happens when women are not controlled by men and when they are allowed to wield arms. As Primislaus says to Wlasta: 'Die Unnatur ward schon in dir Natur' ('Un-nature has already become your nature').<sup>31</sup>

Libussa is a very different kind of woman, who tries to rule justly and by consensus, but because she is a woman the men cannot accept this. At the beginning of Act II she herself had already explained that she would never want to be superior to the menfolk in any case, because then they would no longer want her as a woman:

Nicht möcht ich über Männer herrschend ragen,  
Die meiner niemals zu begehrn wagen;  
Die Adler sind sie, die in Kronen bauen,  
Und lichtbegierig nach der Sonne steigen.<sup>32</sup>

I do not want to be higher than men and rule them, for then men would never dare to desire me. They are eagles who build in the treetops and who, greedy for light, rise towards the sun.

Libussa's ideas about womanhood are diametrically opposed to those of the warrior women of Diewin. According to her conception, woman receives and gives life and woman belongs wholly and completely to man and then to her child—a traditional, patriarchal view of female destiny. When her people want to be ruled by a man, Libussa accepts the man that fate has decreed for her, but when she is asked by her sister Tetka whether she loves Primislaus, Libussa replies in a speech of clear-eyed mourning for what she is about to lose:

Ich haß ihn nicht, doch wie soll ich ihn lieben?  
Den Willen unterwirft er mir den Trieben,  
Die Fülle macht er mit der Not vertraut,  
Stört küssend meinen freien Ernst, und baut  
Die Werkstatt seines Lebens in mein Leben,  
Den Leib nimmt er, die Seele muß ich geben,  
Und wer mit diesen beiden sich verpflichtet,  
Der ist vernichtet, der ist hingerichtet;  
Der Herr, der Sklave wird, klagt nicht vergebens:  
Mein war das Leben, nun bin ich des Lebens.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 686.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 614.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 808.

I do not hate him, but how could I love him? He subordinates my will to his drives, he acquaints my fullness with necessity; kissing, he disturbs my free seriousness and make my life into the building-site for his; he takes my body, I have to give him my soul, and whoever hands over these two, that person is destroyed, is condemned to death. The master who becomes a slave does not mourn in vain: My life belonged to me; now I belong to life.

When Primislaus becomes Libussa's husband, he takes her sword from her, saying that it might harm her: 'Geliebte, hüte dich, es könnte schneiden' ('Watch out, dear, it could cut you').<sup>34</sup> He thereby turns the warrior maiden, whom throughout the play we have seen armed and in armour, into the little woman who needs to be told simple things about such male objects as swords. Political power is based on military might, so Libussa has to lose both. The scene continues:

PRIMISLAUS: Dem Mann gebührt, das Schwert allein zu führen  
Zu richten, streiten, scheiden und entscheiden.

*Er entblößt das Schwert.*

VOLK (*unterbricht ihn wieder*):

Dem Mann gebührt, die Weiber zu regieren.<sup>35</sup>

PRIMISLAUS: It is only fitting for man alone to bear the sword, to judge, to fight, to divide and to decide.

*He unsheathes the sword.*

THE PEOPLE (*interrupting him again*): It is fitting for the man to rule over women.

Primislaus brings the previous primitive way of life of the Bohemians to an end, promulgating rules about property rights, monogamy, the family, and patriarchal inheritance, and his subjects draw the correct conclusion that this also means the subjugation and diminishment of women.

Anett Kollmann credits Libussa with agency, claiming that she both chooses Primislaus over his two rivals and voluntarily hands power over to him, while Robertson sees her fate rather as the 'annulment of woman', saying that 'Brentano's imagery tends to deny women any substantive existence and to define them only as sustainers of men's lives'.<sup>36</sup> Robertson is surely right, for the play shows us women being stripped of all power—whether this is Zwratka's primitive magic, the martial prowess of Wlasta and

<sup>34</sup> Brentano, *Prag*, 814.                   <sup>35</sup> Ibid. 815.

<sup>36</sup> Anett Kollmann, *Gepanzerte Empfindsamkeit. Helden in Frauengestalt um 1800* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004), 173–96, at 196, and Robertson, 'On the Threshold of Patriarchy', 212. See too Yixu Lü, *Frauenherrschaft im Drama des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Iudicium, 1993).

her sisters, or Libussa's authority to rule and judge. If we take seriously Libussa's speech quoted above, she has become a slave. In the account he wrote of the genesis and purpose of the play, 'Die Entstehung und der Schluss des romantischen Schauspiels "Die Gründung Prags"' ('The Genesis and Ending of the Romantic drama *Die Gründung Prags*'), Brentano says: 'Der ganze Inhalt der vorliegenden Arbeit aber ist die Entstehung eines Staates, der Kampf und Untergang einzelner Leidenschaft gegen die Ordnung und das Gesetz des Ganzen' ('The whole content of this work is, however, the origin of a state, the conflict and downfall of the passion of the individual against the order and law of the whole').<sup>37</sup> Indeed, unruly men have to be disciplined too, but it is the women who are the real losers, Libussa's final action being to sink into the arms of her sisters, whether in a faint or in death is not specified. Before she does so she describes her prophetic vision of the city of Prague and of the coming of Christianity in ecstatic tones.

Karoline von Woltmann's story *Der Mädchenkrieg* appeared in 1815, the year after Brentano's play, and enters into a dialogue with it, as well as with Müsäus's retelling of the Libussa legend. It appeared in her collection *Volkssagen der Böhmen* ('Bohemian Folk Myths'), which she published in Prague after she had moved there with her husband in 1813.<sup>38</sup> Woltmann (1782–1847) tells the story of Wlastislawa and her Amazons, but shows how this inversion of the patriarchal order is the men's own fault. They abuse their new powers and become tyrants, neglect the women who were Libussa's followers, and, stupidly, treat them with contempt, saying: 'das ist das Recht der Männer, daß sie Herren sind, und sich ein Weib erkiesen, ihnen unterthan zu seyn nach Gefallen' ('it is men's right to be overlords and choose a woman to be subject to them as they like').<sup>39</sup> As a result, Wlastislawa creates a 'Freistatt, wo jedes Weib Zuflucht finde, Ehre und Freiheit' ('a place of freedom where every woman may find refuge, honour, and liberty').<sup>40</sup> So many women from all over Bohemia leave their men in order to join them that the women soon need a large fortress to hold them all and make their independence visible: 'bald war keine Verschmähte, keine Beleidigte, keine Erzürnte, die nicht Heilung ihrer Schmerzen bei Wlastislawa gesucht hätte' ('soon there was no woman who was despised, no woman who had been offended, no angry woman, who would not have

<sup>37</sup> Brentano, *Prag*, 534.

<sup>38</sup> Karoline von Woltmann, *Der Mädchenkrieg*, in *Volkssagen der Böhmen*, vol. 2 (Prague: Johann Gottfried Carve, 1815), 56–194.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 62–3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 71.

tried to have her sufferings healed in Wlastislawa's company').<sup>41</sup> The women, therefore, build the castle of Diewin with their own hands, and soon the Amazons have 'Bundesgenossinnen fast in jeder Hütte' ('allies in almost every hut').<sup>42</sup> The Amazons are brave, ruthless, bloodthirsty, and cunning, and the men are no match for them—the reader cannot help feeling that Woltmann enjoys telling us this. The women are perfectly prepared to use the arts of seduction to lull the men into a false sense of security before killing them, and the men get very much the worst of the various encounters.

As a contrast to these ruthless warriors, however, Woltmann invents two very different women, also followers of Libussa: two sisters called Hrawka and Dobromilia. They do not join the Amazons, for they are married and betrothed respectively to two of the sons of Hesky. They love and support their men, but their men begin to mistrust them, thinking that they are just like the other women. So mistrustful do the men become that they drive Hrawka and Dobromilia out of their home and force them to take refuge in Diewin. By now the Amazons have become drunk on power and blood, and neither Hrawka nor Dobromilia agree with the heartlessness, blood-thirstiness, and deviousness of Wlastislawa and her followers. Wlastislawa has herself declared supreme ruler, and promulgates a law that all male children will have their right eyes gouged out so that they cannot see when holding a shield, and their right thumb mutilated so that they cannot hold a sword firmly. Girls, however, are to be trained in arms. The outcome of the tale is that Dobromilia and Hrawka prove their love for their men; they are rescued from the increasingly out-of-control Amazons, Diewin is razed to the ground, and the sons of Hesky are penitently reunited with their women. Wlastislawa is killed in battle along with many of her companions. The reader is not told what happens to those Amazons who are not killed. Only the last sentence of the story carries a hidden warning to the male inhabitants of Bohemia in Woltmann's time. The narrator says that the modern Bohemian women, fiery, tall, and equal to anything, bear witness to the fact that the old story is not just a fable.

Woltmann is following the depiction of Libussa's warrior maidens given in Hájek. Wlastislawa has all the ruthlessness, the willingness to trick and deceive, and the bloodthirstiness of the earlier accounts. She also exemplifies Schiller's famous statement in 'das Lied von der Glocke':

<sup>41</sup> Woltmann, *Der Mädchenkrieg*, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 87.

Da werden Weiber zu Hyänen  
 Und treiben mit Entsetzen Scherz,  
 Noch zuckend, mit des Panthers Zähnen,  
 Zerreißend sie des Feindes Herz.<sup>43</sup>

Then women become hyenas and make light of horror. With the teeth of the panther they tear the enemy's heart while it is still beating.

Women become hyenas, we remember, as the outcome of revolution:

Weh, wenn sich in dem Schoß der Städte  
 Der Feuerzunder still gehäuft,  
 Das Volk, zerreißend seine Kette,  
 Zur Eigenhilfe schrecklich greift!<sup>44</sup>

Woe, when in the bosom of the cities the tinder has been silently heaped up, the people, tearing at their chains, have terrible recourse to self-help.

This is just what the Amazon state represents—‘Eigenhilfe’ (‘self-help’), a revolution of the powerless and disrespected against their masters. The question here is not whether Woltmann thinks that women should have a state of their own or whether women should kill. Of course she does not think either of these things.<sup>45</sup> In 1826, for instance, she writes in her treatise *Über Natur, Bestimmung, Tugend und Bildung der Frauen* (‘On the Nature, Destiny, Virtue and Education of Women’): ‘Ein unmittelbarer Anteil der Frauen an der Vertheidigung des Staates wäre noch widernatürlicher, als ihr unmittelbarer unbedingter Anteil an den Staatsgeschäften’ (‘a direct participation by women in the defence of the state would be even more unnatural than their direct unconditional participation in the affairs of state’)<sup>46</sup>—though she contradicts the latter part of this sentence a few pages later by showing what excellent monarchs Elizabeth I of England and Maria Theresia were. The question is not whether Woltmann legitimizes the Bohemian warrior women and their state—she does not—but whether she portrays it as the only option under the circumstances, given the poor behaviour of those who are born to rule. The women behave as

<sup>43</sup> Friedrich Schiller, ‘Das Lied von der Glocke’, Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: *Deutsche Literatur von Lessing bis Kafka* (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 145714–31.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> See Woltmann’s correspondence with Therese Huber, in which they discuss this: Brigitte Leuschner (ed.), *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Therese Huber (1764–1829) und Karoline von Woltmann (1782–1847). Ein Diskurs über Schreiben und Leben* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Karoline von Woltmann, *Über Natur, Bestimmung, Tugend und Bildung der Frauen* (Vienna: Wallishausser, 1826), 182–3.

they do because, time and again, the men are stupid and unjust. It was the stupidity of Primislau and his nobles that led the women to rebel in the first place, and it is the stupidity of the Hesky men that drives a wedge between them and their two faithful, loving women. Many of the women who join the Amazons do so because they have a justified grievance. If those in power become unjust and tyrannical, it will lead to a bloodthirsty uprising by those they have been maltreating. It is not surprising that the women are beaten in the end—this, after all, is a constituent part of Amazon history, any kind of Amazon. The surprise is how badly the men come out of the story and how well the women perform as warriors and as rulers almost to the last.

Both Brentano's play and Woltmann's story envisage a more or less optimistic future for the Bohemians under patriarchy. This is very different to the ending Franz Grillparzer gave his play *Libussa*.<sup>47</sup> He worked on it for thirty years, from 1818 to 1848, and never saw it either published or performed in his lifetime. Where Brentano has thirty-eight speaking parts Grillparzer has thirteen, and his focus is consequently much tighter. He concentrates on Libussa's union with Primislau to show the transition from nature to culture and from myth to history, and the consequences of that union for Bohemian society. Grillparzer's Libussa is not a warrior—that role is played by Wlasta, who has a far less prominent role here than did the warrior women in Brentano's play. Libussa represents those qualities that are connoted female in the patriarchal order: gentleness, consensuality, caring, emotionality.<sup>48</sup> When she takes over from her father Krokus, she institutes a reign in which all are equal and the state resembles a family with Libussa as mother. But the men see this as a world turned upside-down, in which peasants are as good as nobles and women have authority: 'Weiber führen Waffen und raten und richten, / Der Bauer ein Herr, der Herr mitnichten' ('Women carry weapons and take counsel and judge, the peasant is a lord and the lord is nothing').<sup>49</sup> So Libussa, the seer, agrees to take a husband without supernatural powers, the peasant Primislau, and the short-lived rule of women is at an end.<sup>50</sup> He has authoritarian notions of the power relations between man and wife and between ruler and the state. Robertson

<sup>47</sup> Franz Grillparzer, *Libussa. Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*, in *Sämtliche Werke, Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. August Sauer, (Vienna: Schroll, 1927), vol. 1/6, pp. 179–343.

<sup>48</sup> Anna K. Kuhn, 'Myth, Matriarchy, Männerphantasie: Rereading Grillparzer's *Libussa*', in Anna K. Kuhn and Barbara D. Wright (eds.), *Playing for Stakes: German-Language Drama in Social Context. Essays in Honor of Herbert Lederer* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 139–60.

<sup>49</sup> Grillparzer, *Libussa*, 281.

<sup>50</sup> Lü, *Frauenherrschaft im Drama*, 98.

goes so far as to call him ‘an unreconstructed male chauvinist’.<sup>51</sup> He knows what is best for others, whether it is his subjects or his wife. He chops down trees to build his city, Prague, and wants to herd people together for their own good. When Libussa demurs, saying that they will be cut off from nature and that each will then lose their own individuality, Primislau replies: ‘Was jeder abgibt, geben auch die anderen. / Und so empfängt der eine tausendfach’ (‘What each gives up, the others give up too, and so each one receives a thousandfold’).<sup>52</sup> Primislau sees trade as the obvious path towards prosperity and progress, and his new state cannot tolerate such figures from another age as Wlasta and her women, who from Primislau’s point of view are unnatural. They are to be sent off to a far corner of the kingdom, where no one will have contact with them, while he presses on with his vision of progress: ‘Wir wollen weiter, weiter in der Bahn’ (‘We want to go further, further on our way’).<sup>53</sup> Libussa’s sisters will also leave, since they too belong to the old order.

Libussa is herself wholly diminished by marriage, as Wlasta points out to Primislau near the end of the play. At this point Libussa has been married for a year and has given birth to a son. Her gift of prophecy was connected to her virginity, so she has lost it, relying instead on her husband’s wisdom (though she does not regard this as infallible, saying to Wlasta: ‘Er hat fast immer recht’—‘He is almost always right’).<sup>54</sup> Where she was a visionary, he is a man of reason. It is not she but Primislau who decides to found the city of Prague, which, as Yixu Lü points out, means that it is no longer a divinely inspired act but a wholly human one.<sup>55</sup> It is Primislau who suggests to Libussa that she should show her approval of the projected new city by taking part, as a priestess, in the ceremony to bless it. For her to do this would mean reconnecting to the divine sphere from which her marriage has exiled her. Because these two spheres are incompatible, she has to die.<sup>56</sup> Instead of blessing the new order, she assumes the mantle of the seer and prophet and foretells a bleak future for the new city (whose name means ‘threshold’) and for the Bohemian people. The new society that Primislau is creating she declares to be venal, mistrustful, egotistical, and greedy. War and bloodshed will characterize this new age, which, as Anna Kuhn says,

<sup>51</sup> Robertson, ‘On the Threshold of Patriarchy’, 216.

<sup>52</sup> Grillparzer, *Libussa*, 329.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 333.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 328.

<sup>55</sup> Lü, *Frauenherrschaft im Drama*, 101.

<sup>56</sup> See Annette Runte, ‘Verkettungen. Zu Clemens Brentanos *Die Gründung Prags* und Franz Grillparzers *Libussa*’, in Ulrike Bergermann and Elisabeth Strowick (eds.), *Weiterlesen: Literatur und Wissen; Festschrift für Marianne Schüller* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007), 231–76.

bears 'all the negative marks that Grillparzer associated with the bourgeois nationalist capitalism of his time'.<sup>57</sup> By the time Grillparzer was finishing the play, in 1848, Czech nationalism was burgeoning, with the Czechs striving to break away from the Austrian empire. If a possible Bohemian or Czech nation is to be the ultimate successor to Primislaus' new order, then Grillparzer is not in favour of it. He has Libussa say: 'Das Hohe sieht vom Niedern sich verdrängt. / Und Freiheit wird sich nennen die Gemeinheit' ('What is elevated sees itself displaced by what is base, and meanness will call itself freedom').<sup>58</sup> Libussa does utter a hope that things will improve, but only in some indefinite future age, and before she does so her sisters appear to take their leave, about to depart 'ins Elend, in die Welt' ('into exile, out into the world')—the word 'Elend' meaning both exile and misery).<sup>59</sup> Libussa is bereft of all she holds dear. She has made the sacrifice of uniting herself with a human and bearing him a son, out of love for humans, she says. But humans are killing you, says her sister Kascha. Having uttered her dismal prophecy, Libussa dies. The new order has obliterated her.

If Grillparzer's play bears the marks of the period in which he finished it—burgeoning Czech nationalism—*Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* (1808), by Zacharias Werner (1768–1823), like Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Der Held des Nordens* ('The Hero of the North') discussed below, is a product of the years leading up to what Germans call the 'Wars of Liberation' that freed them from Napoleon.<sup>60</sup> It was first staged by Goethe in Weimar on 30 January 1808 to mark the birthday of Luise, duchess of Sachsen-Weimar (1757–1830). It was composed at the same time as Kleist's *Penthesilea* and shares some similarities of plot with it, in that both plays present an insoluble conflict between two societies, each represented by a male and female warrior who are also lovers. The indissoluble bonds of each to his or her own order make their love impossible, and the outcome in both plays is that the female protagonist kills the male and then chooses death for herself. Werner's play is set in Cracow, and the Sarmatians of the title correspond to

<sup>57</sup> Kuhn, 'Myth, Matriarchy, *Männerphantasie*', 157.

<sup>58</sup> Grillparzer, *Libussa*, 339. <sup>59</sup> Ibid. 342.

<sup>60</sup> Zacharias Werner, *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten. Eine romantische Tragödie mit Gesang in fünf Akten*, in *Dramen von Zacharias Werner*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971). For other realizations of the figure of Wanda see Andreas Degen, 'Patria und Peitsche. Weiblichkeitsentwürfe in der deutschen Wanda-Figur des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Convivium. Germanistisches Jahrbuch Polen* (2007), 57–78. See also Ritchie Robertson, 'Women Warriors and the Origin of the State: Werner's *Wanda* and Kleist's *Penthesilea*', in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 61–85.

the Polish nobility, who are ruled by their warrior queen Wanda. The action begins with Rüdiger, a German duke from the Baltic island of Rügen, and his army coming up the River Weichsel towards Cracow. Rüdiger has come to find the woman he fell in love with ten years before when he spent some time at Libussa's court. This woman is Wanda, and Rüdiger intends to become 'der König jener Königin' ('the king of that queen'),<sup>61</sup> that is, to capture and dominate her. He swears to his men that he will take her or die. As Kollmann points out, Rüdiger represents the Enlightenment hero who achieves things for himself by his own actions, who does not just rely on inheritance to provide him with territory, status, and power. Everything he has and is he has achieved for himself.<sup>62</sup> He has just finished telling the bard Balderon his intentions when Libussa's ghost appears to warn him to turn back. When she vanishes, Rüdiger asks Balderon to go to Wanda's court and offer her his hand. Act II presents Wanda, the victorious warrior queen, who is both successful ruler and successful general. She wishes to rule with justice and reason and to bring about peace. Again, as in the Libussa plays, her male subjects cannot conceive of a woman living alone, still less of a queen ruling alone, and want her to marry. She has loved and lost, for she too loved Rüdiger when they met at Libussa's court. Now, without knowing that he is near, she swears a sacred oath of chastity, abjuring love and saying that she is wedded only to her people. This means that she is turning her back on her destiny as a woman. She is daring to be 'mehr als mein Geschick' ('more than my destiny'),<sup>63</sup> as she says in Act III to the gentle Ludmilla, who is the embodiment of the patriarchal notion of the gentle, passive, suffering female and therefore the opposite of Libussa. As Kollmann points out, the concept of renunciation is one of Werner's central themes, and she relates it to ideas about emotional discipline, self-control, and fatalist self-sacrifice stemming from the German Protestant tradition.<sup>64</sup>

When Libussa and Rüdiger meet in Act III and she realizes that this is the man she loves but that her oath prevents them from ever being united, she decides to destroy him, saying: 'Soll ich den Demant nimmer denn besitzen, / So will ich ihn zermalmen, ihn und mich' ('If I may never possess the diamond then I will crush it, it and myself').<sup>65</sup> The mortal combat of the two lovers is thus

<sup>61</sup> Werner, *Wanda*, 211.

<sup>62</sup> See Kollmann's discussion of this in *Gepanzerte Empfindsamkeit*, 153–4, and Lü's in her *Frauenherrschaft im Drama*, 13–41.

<sup>63</sup> Werner, *Wanda*, 235.

<sup>64</sup> Kollmann, *Gepanzerte Empfindsamkeit*, 155.

<sup>65</sup> Werner, *Wanda*, 243.

pre-programmed, for Rüdiger's honour is at stake. He cannot return home without Wanda, so must destroy her and die himself, which is exactly what she also intends when they engage in hand-to-hand combat. Wanda says: 'Ich kann ihn töten; liebend mit ihm untergehn!' ('I can kill him, go loving with him to my doom').<sup>66</sup> As each tries to massacre the other in a fight to the death, Libussa's ghost appears again to tell them, in a lengthy speech, that they have been conjoined since all eternity but that the only way they can be united is in death. What is meant is that they will achieve a higher, neo-Platonic union in the afterlife, but Wanda has not yet understood the full import of this and pledges her troth to Rüdiger with a ring, saying that her oath to her people is null and void, since she was already wedded to him when she made it. She offers him a place at her side as ruler, but he cannot accept anything he has not captured for himself. His only alternative is to die. But then, from an inscription that Libussa had engraved inside Wanda's ring many years before, they arrive at the solution: theirs must be a love-death—a 'Liebestod'—and they can then be united in the next life. Wanda, holding Rüdiger in her arms, plunges his sword into his back in a highly eroticized farewell scene, and Act IV ends with his death. As he expires, he utters the one word 'Dank' ('Thanks')<sup>67</sup> and, as Wanda embraces his corpse, Libussa's ghost appears again to announce that their harsh destiny has been fulfilled.

The play does not end there, however. Act V presents the elaborate thanksgiving ceremony for the Sarmatian victory over the Germans, during which 'goddess Wanda', as her people call her, calmly and deliberately prepares for her own death. Werner goes out of his way to explain in the stage directions that Wanda is in no sense deranged by pain and loss but has risen above such feelings. She calmly and deliberately makes of herself the ultimate thanksgiving sacrifice to the gods by leaping through the sacred flames from a crag into the Weichsel. At the point where she enters the waves there ascends a huge lily, wound round with a palm branch, the lily representing Wanda and the palm Rüdiger. This means, say the priests, that the goddess is transfigured and that the gods still exist. The mystic union of the two lovers, the two dead warriors, has taken place. Wanda represents a combination of morality, sensuality, and heroism, while at the same time transgressing norms of female conduct.

But what Werner's tragedy shows yet again is that woman can rule successfully and woman can make war successfully, but only for a time.

<sup>66</sup> Werner, *Wanda*, 248.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

She must ultimately fail. Woman cannot ignore her emotions because they are her destiny, and she cannot satisfy her emotional and sexual needs as a warrior or queen because satisfying them would lead to motherhood and this, again, is incompatible with power and might. Once the woman warrior loves, she has to die, immolating herself in order to bring the unruly emotions that she represents to order. This self-sacrifice is not unique to Slav heroines: one of its most egregious exponents is the most famous warrior woman of the Germanic tradition, Brünhild.

## Brünhild, the Germanic warrior maiden

Brünhild is most widely known today through the figure of Brünnhilde in Wagner's great operatic tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (completed by 1874), in which she is one of the Valkyries, warrior maidens who bear dead heroes off to Valhalla. The first entrance of the Valkyries into the consciousness of German intellectuals, however, was a hundred years earlier in Herder's translation of a poem from Thomas Berthelin's *Antiquitatem Danicarum et de causis contemptae a Danis ad hoc gentilibus mortis libri tres* (Copenhagen, 1689). This poem, entitled 'Die Todesgöttinnen' ('The Goddesses of Death'), had the subtitle: 'Das Gesicht eines Wandlers in einer einsamen Grabhöhle, da er die Valkyriu also weben sah' ('The vision of a wanderer in a lonely cave in which he saw the Valkyrie weaving'), and Herder incorporated it into the collection of folk songs that he had been putting together since the 1760s.<sup>68</sup> What these wild and sanguinary women are weaving are human entrails from which they are hanging human heads:

Bluttriefende Spiesse schiessen sie durch,  
Und haben Waffen und Pfeil in Händen,  
Mit Schwerdern dichten sie das Siegsgarn fest.  
Sie kommen zu weben mit gezogenen Schwerdern . . .

They shoot spears dripping with blood through [the web], and have weapons and arrows in their hands. With swords they make fast the yarn of victory. They come to their weaving with drawn swords.

The Valkyries, therefore, are angels of death, personifications of war, *femmes fatales*, and Fates rolled into one. At the end of the poem they ride off with drawn

<sup>68</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Stimmen der Völker in Liedern'. Zwei Teile 1778/79, ed. Heinz Rölleke (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975), 'Die Todesgöttinnen', 313–15.

swords. That these bloodthirsty women can become the Valkyries imagined by Wagner is the first surprise. That that kinder version could be superseded by the bloodthirsty and perverse imaginings of the *fin-de-siècle* is the second.

Herder's Valkyries illustrate how Scandinavian material became part of the history of the German people, so much so that, by the 1780s, Old Norse mythology had been subsumed into German mythology. By 1800 such influential writers as Friedrich Schlegel, the Brothers Grimm, and Joseph Görres were referring to the Germans and the Scandinavians as one people with the same cultural origins. This made Nordic mythology available as a national German myth, but at much the same time, in 1784, the *Nibelungenlied*, the great medieval epic poem, appeared in a first modern edition by Chr. H. Myller, though it was Friedrich von der Hagen's modern German translation, published in 1807, that made the epic available to a wider public. This was just the moment at which Germans needed such a myth.

In August 1806 Napoleon had forced the emperor Franz II Joseph Karl (1768–1835) to abdicate and so brought to an end the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation founded by Charlemagne on Christmas Day 800. On 14 October he had decisively defeated the Prussian troops at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt, and on 27 October 1806 he drilled his troops on the Lustgarten in the centre of the Prussian capital. Such comprehensive national humiliation called for national renewal. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was one of the most important figures in this national renewal, giving his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* ('Addresses to the German Nation') in Berlin in 1807, in which he proposed a programme of national education but with a war against Napoleon as a precondition for such a programme.<sup>69</sup> When a university was founded in Berlin for the first time in 1809 by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte was made its first rector.

Fichte's friend Friedrich Heinrich Karl, baron de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843), had already begun to work, in 1805, on a 'dramatic scene' relating to the mythical German hero Siegfried. This scene was called *Der gehörnte Siegfried in der Schmiede* ('Siegfried the Dragon-skinned in the Smithy').<sup>70</sup> Fouqué then went on to write a dramatic trilogy called *Der Held des Nordens*,

<sup>69</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Über den Krieg. Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegel ihrer theoretischen Reflexion* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2002), 56.

<sup>70</sup> See Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, *Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's Nibelungen-Trilogie 'Der Held des Nordens'*. *Studien zu Stoff, Struktur und Rezeption* (St Ingbert: Universitätsverlag, 2000), 16–24. Claudia Stockinger deals more broadly with Fouqué as a dramatist in *Das dramatische Werk Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des romantischen Dramas* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000).

of which the first part was published in 1808 and Parts II and III were completed in 1809 and published in 1810.<sup>71</sup> Each of the three parts of the trilogy is dedicated to Fichte, signalling that the plays, though about the mythic past, are closely connected to the contemporary situation of the German-speaking lands, in particular Prussia, and are intended to restore German pride. In the dedication to Part I Fouqué castigates deformed ('verkrüppelt') foreign literature unsuited to express the 'Lieder... der alt ehrbaren Zeit ('the lays of an ancient, honourable era').<sup>72</sup> He will give the Germans a true Nordic hero, in contrast to what is 'undeutsch, flach, krankhaft, lebenslos' ('un-German, shallow, sickly, lifeless').<sup>73</sup> Though Fouqué begins work on his trilogy by steeping himself in such German sources as the prose romance *Der gehörnte Siegfried*, and then goes on to study *Das Nibelungenlied*, the final version of his trilogy is much more closely based on the Icelandic *Volsunga Saga* ('The Saga of the Volsungs'). Fouqué, who already knew French and German, Latin and Greek, learned Icelandic, Danish, Swedish, and Gothic, and was the first German dramatist to use the Icelandic material before Wagner. He also precedes Wagner in creating a verse form that seeks to imitate Icelandic metre. The *Volsunga Saga* deals with much of the same material as the *Nibelungenlied*, relating two stories: the life and death of the hero Siegfried, and the connected story of the subsequent downfall of a Burgundian clan at the court of Attila. In the *Volsunga Saga*, however, the gods and the Norns (the Nordic Fates) play a far greater role, and the supernatural dimension of the action is consequently enhanced.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Fouqué consciously conceived his trilogy as a counterpart to Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.<sup>75</sup>

The warrior maiden Brynhildis—as she is called here—only appears in Part I of the trilogy, *Sigurd, der Schlangentöter* ('Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer'). Sigurd, the hero, is an honest, naive, action hero possessed of superhuman strength, many of whose deeds are already mapped out for him by destiny—as the Norns explain at various points. Armed with his magic sword Gramur and riding Grane, the horse that the god Odin gave him, Sigurd's first quest is to kill the dragon Fafner, take the treasure he is guarding, and bathe in his blood which, but for one point where a leaf stuck to his back, makes him

<sup>71</sup> Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Der Held des Nordens* (Berlin: Hitzig, 1810), [www.zeno.org](http://www.zeno.org) (accessed on 29 June 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>74</sup> There is a full account of the reception of Nordic and Germanic myth and of Fouqué's sources in Schmidt, *Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's Nibelungen-Trilogie*.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 56.

invincible. (The play is divided not into acts but into ‘Abentheuren’, ‘quests’, as the *Nibelungenlied* is). Sigurd’s second quest leads him to the mountain fortress Hindarfjall, circled round by fire, in which Brynhildis lies in full armour, dressed like a man—indeed, Sigurd thinks at first that she is a youth—waiting to be roused by the hero who knows no fear. The Norns have just explained that her trance is a punishment meted out to her by Odin, because she, the warrior maiden, helped Agnar, against Odin’s orders, to defeat King Hialmgunnar. But Brynhildis is not just a warrior, she is also a seer who knows who Sigurd is before he says his name, who gives him a series of maxims to help him in his future conduct in the world, and who, when he leaves her after they have plighted their troth and consummated their love, foretells the hatred of his blood-brothers.

If the Brynhildis of the mountain-top is a being with supernatural powers, the Brynhildis that Sigurd meets again at the court of her brother-in-law Heimer is a mortal woman, subject to the norms of courtly society. Brynhildis, now a princess rather than a warrior, and Sigurd celebrate their love, but Brynhildis warns him that he is destined for Gudruna, King Giuke’s daughter, not for her, and that a dark future awaits him. Such a fate cannot be deflected (‘kein Lenken hilft, kein Früherwissen’, ‘no steering of events will help, no foreknowledge’),<sup>76</sup> and when he leaves she bids him farewell for the last time. The next time she appears, in the third quest, it is as the other Brynhildis, alone again and in armour in her fire-encircled fortress on the crag. She knows that Sigurd will come to take her and that he is doing so to win Gudruna, having been given a magic drink that makes him forget Brynhildis, and she mourns the loss of her love. When Sigurd appears to woo her in the guise of Gunnar, he has no memory of ever having met her before. Brynhildis has to follow the man who braved the flames to reach her and so goes with Sigurd to court, where, at the end of the fourth quest, Sigurd realizes what he has done, how he is married to two women, and how he deceived Brynhildis and betrayed Gudruna, who in the meantime has borne him a son. He decides, however, that he has no choice but to endure what has happened. This solution does not work because, in the fifth quest, Gudruna reveals to Brynhildis that the man who won her is not Gunnar but Sigurd, and the knowledge that Sigurd has not only betrayed her for Gudruna but that he tricked her into marrying Gunnar drives Brynhildis into madness (‘Raserei’). Her first reaction to the news is

<sup>76</sup> Fouqué, *Held des Nordens*, 88.

described as a violent one, but she has now descended into silence. Sigurd, thinking he can console her, goes to visit her in her chamber where, for the first time, we see her wearing armour at court. She is lying stiffly on her bed, as she did in the fiery fortress. Sigurd, now wiser than he was before, realizes that they are all lost, that he will die soon, and that she cannot outlive him. He now confesses his love for her. She is 'Mein erstes, schönes, wundervolles Lieb' ('my first, beautiful, wondrous love').<sup>77</sup>

Brynhildis had to marry the man who conquered the flames at Hidarfiall, but, since that is not Gunnar but Sigurd, she, the innocent one, has to atone for what has happened by choosing death herself. From this point on Brynhildis becomes a Fury, engineering Sigurd's death by telling Gudruna's brother Gutterm that if he kills Sigurd he can have his gold. As Sigurd dies, he calls Brynhildis's love foolish because she would rather see him dead than married to Gudruna. Just as he expires, Gudruna is brought the news that her son by Sigurd has also been killed. Brynhildis laughs fiendishly at the bloodbath that ensues at Giuke's court, and organizes her own self-immolation as 'Sigurds Todesbraut' ('Sigurd's bride in death'). This she does by having Fafner's treasure spread out like a carpet and stabbing herself, so that she comes to lie on the pile of coins: 'Blut ist ja lebend Gold' ('blood is living gold').<sup>78</sup> She asks Gunnar to build a pyre and place on it the corpses of Sigurd and his little son, as well as Sigurd's sword, and requests that eight of the maids and eight of the servants that came with her from her father's house burn in the pyre with her. As the flames burn fiercely she walks towards the fire, bleeding, and throws herself in, saying that this is her wedding to Sigurd. He braved the flames to reach her; now she is doing the same in order to be united with him. The three Norns appear out of the smoke, speaking of the future consequences of Sigurd's death, of queen Gudruna, whose future vengeance on those who killed Sigurd will bring about the end of the Volsung clan. Wolf Gerhard Schmidt points out that what rises out of the flames is not love, as it is at the end of Wagner's *Ring* cycle, but vengeance. Throughout the trilogy it is the women who are the drivers of the action; they are the ones with prophetic and divinatory capabilities, and in the case of Brynhildis in Part I and Gudruna in Part II are the ones who move from loving woman to demon. Only Aslauga, the eponymous heroine of Part III, controls her drives and her emotions and points the way ahead to a Christian world.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 204.

The next dramatization of this story is Ernst Raupach's *Der Nibelungen-Hort* ('The Treasure of the Nibelungs'), first performed in 1828, though not printed until 1833.<sup>79</sup> It is notable for the central role that Raupach gives Brunhild, for the very negative portrayal of the female characters, and for the fact that Hebbel saw a performance of the play with his future wife, Christine Enghans, playing Chriemhild. Raupach makes numerous alterations to the story, of which the first is that Siegfried rescues the unconscious Chriemhild from the dragon and falls in love with her there and then. Brunhild is depicted as a woman who simply does not accept the natural gender order and woman's destiny as wife, housewife, and mother:

Die Götter gaben mir des Weibes Bildung;  
 Doch männlich schlägt das Herz in meiner Brust,  
 Und männlich denkt der Geist in meinem Haupt.  
 Ein Abscheu sind mir alle Frauenwerke,  
 Zu denen rohe Kraft sie zwingt. Ich will  
 Nicht weben gleich der mißgeschaff'nen Spinne,  
 Nicht gleich der feisten Hummel Vorrath sammeln,  
 Nicht hadernd, strafend Mägd' in Ordnung halten,  
 Wie Schaf ein Hund durch Bellen und Biß.  
 Gehorchen kann ich nicht; ich kann nur herrschen.  
 Die Liebe kenn' ich so nur, daß ich weiß,  
 Sie macht das Weib zu eines Herren Magd.  
 Ich kann nicht Kinder nähren, warten, pflegen,  
 Denn brechen würd' ein so gebrechlich Wesen  
 In meiner Lanz' und Schwert gewohnten Hand.<sup>80</sup>

The gods gave me a woman's education, but the heart in my bosom beats in a manly way and the spirit in my head thinks in a manly way. I loathe all those women's works which they are forced to carry out by brute force. I do not want to weave like the deformed spider, nor to gather stores like the fat bee nor, scolding, punishing, to keep servant-maids in order, as a dog does sheep by barking and biting. I cannot obey, I can only rule. I only know so much about love that I know it makes a woman into the servant of a man. I cannot feed, tend, nurture children, for such a fragile being would break in my hand which is used to lance and sword.

Siegfried sees no problem in sorting out this unnatural woman, and regards the task of winning Brunhild for Günther as a minor chore:

<sup>79</sup> Ernst Raupach, *Ernst Raupach's dramatische Werke erster Gattung*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1833).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 217–18.

Hier gilt's dem Freund zu helfen, und ein Weib  
 Zu zähmen, das nicht lieben will. Ei seht doch,  
 Was nutzt ein Weib auf Erden, das nicht liebt?  
 Fort mit dem Unkraut!<sup>81</sup>

It's a matter here of helping a friend and of taming a woman who doesn't want to love. For heaven's sake, what's the use of a woman on this earth who does not love? Away with a weed like that!

Siegfried is always depicted in dramatizations of this material as being naive and childlike, but here he is shown as a muscle-man who has no moral sense whatsoever. He would use a sword that had killed ten children if it suited him, he says in Act I, scene 3, so it never occurs to him that he is impugning Brunhild's honour by pretending to be Günther. His solution to Chriemhild's lack of discretion later on is to give her a good beating, and he urges Günther to do the same to Brunhild. Brunhild is never shown actually fighting, and once she gets to Worms as Günther's wife the rivalry between her and Chriemhild rapidly turns them both into vengeful Furies, irrational, jealous, and vindictive. At the denouement of this play Brunhild comes on stage holding a sword in one hand and her son by Günther (or Siegfried) in the other. She is instantly disarmed, whereupon she rushes off to leap into the Rhine, holding her son. In Raupach's terms, this means that Brunhild is redeemed by being deprived of her warrior persona and by dying as a mother.

In the 1850s three men, close contemporaries, were working simultaneously on dramas based on the Nibelung material—Emanuel Geibel (1815–84), Friedrich Hebbel (1813–63), and Richard Wagner (1813–83).<sup>82</sup> Geibel called his blank-verse tragedy simply *Brunhild*. It first appeared in 1857, going into a second edition already in 1861.<sup>83</sup> It is a compelling psychological drama that focuses on a small number of well-drawn characters. The two heroic figures, Siegfried and Brunhild, stand head and shoulders above the rest. Siegfried is heroic because of his magnificent physique and joy in his own physicality, while Brunhild is heroic because of the depth of her

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 207.

<sup>82</sup> Other nineteenth-century works based on the Nibelung material are: Heinrich Ludwig Edmund Dorn's opera *Die Nibelungen* (1855); Herbert Erich Buhl's novel, *Krone der Frauen. Roman der Königin Brunhild* (Berlin: Reichel, 1939); Eric Colberg's play for young people, *Brunhild. Ein feierliches Spiel* (Leipzig: Strauch, 1942); and Heinrich Rogge's play *Brunhild. Drama. Dramen aus der deutschen Sagen- und Märchenwelt* (Neumünster: Pfeilerverlag, 1940).

<sup>83</sup> Emanuel Geibel, *Brunhild. Eine Tragödie aus der Nibelungensage* (Stuttgart–Augsburg: n.pub., 1857; 2nd edn. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1861). Quotations are taken from the fifth reprinting of 1890.

feeling and her capacity for suffering. Gunther and his sister Chriemhild are both destroyed because they recognize and are drawn to the two heroic figures. The weak Gunther loves and admires both Siegfried and Brunhild, cannot exist without either of them, and betrays them both. Chriemhild, the simple, loving child-woman, revolves around her husband Siegfried like a moth around a flame. The tragedy will turn her into a vengeful monster. Hagen feels displaced in his role as Gunther's right-hand man by Siegfried and so is happy to be Brunhild's instrument and stab him to death. The eponymous heroine is Brunhild, the northern queen and a real warrior in this play, who puts on armour to fight Siegfried, who is pretending to be Gunther. As a warrior she can be wounded physically, but it is as a woman that she can be wounded emotionally. She has to have Siegfried killed because as a warrior she has been dishonoured and as a woman she has been raped, betrayed, and abandoned by the man she loves but who (as in the *Nibelungenlied*) has never loved her. It is through Chriemhild's words, reporting what Siegfried told her, that we learn of the shocking violence inflicted on Brunhild. Chriemhild says:

Gedenkst du noch  
 Des ehernen Armes, der in tiefer Finsternis—  
 Zwei Nächte sind's—dich bändigt' und gewaltsam dir  
 Den starren Nachen beugte, daß du winseltest?  
 Gedenkst du sein?—Nun wisse: das war Siegfrieds Arm!  
 Da lagst du Stolze, keuchend, mit gelöstem Haar  
 Zu Füßen ihm, und hieltest seine Knie umfaßt.  
 Und flehstest Schonung tiefzerknirscht und botest ihm  
 Dein ganzes hochgefürstetes Selbst zur Sühne dar.  
 Doch er, der Bettler—hörst Du's?—er verschmähte dich,  
 Um mich, um mich verschmählt' er dich, und ging davon  
 Dich Gunthern lassend, deinem großen Könige!<sup>84</sup>

Do you still remember the arm, strong as bronze, that in inky darkness two nights ago tamed you and with force made you bend your neck so that you whimpered? Do you remember it?—Then know: that was Siegfried's arm! There you lay, O proud one, panting, your hair loose at his feet, and clutched his knees and, crushed, begged him to spare you and offered him your whole princely self in atonement. Yet he, the supposed beggar—d'you hear?—he rejected you for my sake, for my sake he rejected you and went off, leaving you for Gunther, your supposedly great king!

<sup>84</sup> Geibel, *Brunhild*, 94–5.

Geibel is the only dramatist to imagine the physical violence done to Brunhild, to suggest that Siegfried raped her before leaving her for Gunther to rape too.

Earlier in the play, in Act II, we heard Brunhild musing on how she felt the morning after this occurrence, before we were told what had been done to her:

Gestern war  
 Ich noch mein eigen. Stolz und unantastbar  
 In meines Wesens Blüte fühlt' ich mich,  
 Dem Einhorn gleich, das kühn den Jäger höhnt.<sup>85</sup>

Yesterday I was still my own woman. I felt myself to be proud and untouchable in the flower of my being, like the unicorn that daringly mocks the huntsman.

Brunhild organizes Siegfried's death in Geibel's play as she does in Fouqué's, since she cannot allow him to live after what he did to her. She does not do so as a Fury, however, but with calm deliberation. When she sees his corpse, she stabs herself with Siegfried's sword in order to join him in the afterlife: 'O dort, | In heil'ger Dämmerung bei den hohen Schatten, | Dort bist du mein, Geliebter!' ('Oh there, in the sacred twilight with the noble shades, there you are mine, Beloved!').<sup>86</sup> Another love-death, therefore, and the only possible end for a wronged woman.

Friedrich Hebbel called his trilogy *Die Nibelungen* ('The Nibelungs'). It consists of a short one-act prologue called *Der gehörnte Siegfried* ('Siegfried the Dragon-skinned') and then of two full-length plays: *Siegfrieds Tod* ('Siegfried's Death') and *Kriemhilds Rache* ('Kriemhild's Revenge'). He began it in 1853, publishing Part I in 1861 and Part II in 1862. Hebbel called his play a 'German tragedy', underlining the potential of the Nibelung material to become a German national myth. His trilogy is based, not on the Icelandic material, but on the *Nibelungenlied*, and he knew Fouqué's, Raupach's, and Geibel's plays. Hebbel is concerned to provide a human drama with plausible psychological motivation rather than a drama in which fate and supernatural forces move the action. In the world of Hebbel's trilogy might is right, those who are not strong enough to exercise force effectively must use cunning and deception, and, as in all Hebbel's plays, the conflict between the sexes is a central theme.<sup>87</sup> In Hebbel's plot Siegfried comes to the court of the

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>87</sup> See Hilmar Grundmann, *Von 'Weiber-Emancipation' und 'echten Weibern' in Hebbels Tagebüchern und Tragödien. Ein literaturwissenschaftlicher und literaturdidaktischer Beitrag zur Gender-Forschung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2006).

Nibelungs, sees Kriemhild, and undertakes, disguised as her brother Gunther, to win Brunhild, the man-murdering queen of Iceland, for Gunther as the price he has to pay to be allowed to marry his sister. This is explained in *Der gehörnte Siegfried*, in which Siegfried also relates what he knows about Brunhild: she is not only as strong as he is himself but she knows no mercy or compassion, killing every man who enters her fortress to try to win her. *Siegfrieds Tod* opens in Iceland, where Brunhild, though baptized, is portrayed as a figure from an older, more primitive era. She and her nurse Frigga, who still sacrifices to the old gods, have both dreamed that Wotan visited them. The sea of fire around Brunhild's fortress is extinguished and Siegfried, Gunther, and Hagen are near. The audience is never shown Siegfried and Brunhild's meeting, still less their duel; the action simply cuts in Act II to Worms, to the court of Gunther, where Siegfried, having vanquished Brunhild, has now come on ahead to woo Kriemhild. We learn that Brunhild, though forced to leave Iceland, has not submitted to Gunther, to whom she is vastly superior in strength. When she appears, she is a being from another world who does not understand or feel at home in the ways of the court. It is too bright, she says—she feels naked. Siegfried, against his better judgement, has to disguise himself as Gunther once again and vanquish Brunhild in bed just as he did in combat. Once she has lost her virginity to Gunther, as she thinks, she then becomes a docile and loving wife until Kriemhild reveals the secret of her defloration. This is deeply hurtful to Brunhild's honour. Siegfried, who conquered her, did not want her himself, he only wanted to use her to get Kriemhild: 'Ich war nicht bloß verschmäht, / Ich war verschenkt, ich ward wohl gar verhandelt!' ('I was not just rejected, I was given away as a gift, I was even bartered').<sup>88</sup> Brunhild is humiliated and feels cheated. The third act ends with her calling for revenge, and this she achieves by getting Hagen to kill Siegfried. Brunhild does not appear again on stage, for Hebbel, it seems, is not very interested in her, though Alexandra Tischel is of the opinion that Brunhild, like Judith in Hebbel's play of that name, feels herself to be wounded as a subject and therefore needs to avenge this injury.<sup>89</sup> She is a motor in the plot to bring about Siegfried's death and, though we learn in Act III of *Kriemhilds Rache* that Brunhild takes up her abode in Siegfried's tomb to mourn him, tearing her face and weeping, she does not join him in a love-death. When Kriemhild hears about this, her comment is the one word: 'Vampyr'). Indeed, in Act II

<sup>88</sup> Hebbel, *Nibelungen*, 106.

<sup>89</sup> Tischel, *Tragödie der Geschlechter*, 151.

of *Siegfrieds Tod* Brunhild herself described drinking the blood of the heroes she kills by breathing it in, a vampiric act, as has often been pointed out.<sup>90</sup> But this is the only brief mention of Brunhild to be found in *Kriemhilds Rache*, in which the grieving Kriemhild, Siegfried's loving wife, becomes an even more strongly drawn character than in *Siegfrieds Tod*.

Hebbel's Brunhild is said to be a warrior woman who is strong and can fight, though we never actually see her do so. She is also said by Hagen, when he is trying to persuade Siegfried to bed her, to be the proud heiress of the Valkyries and the Norns. But her physical strength and martial prowess are presented in the play rather as a problem that the Nibelungs have to surmount than as an essential element in her personality. She is not the tragic figure of Fouqué's drama, at the mercy of the gods and of man's weakness, nor the wounded and dishonoured woman of Geibel's. Hebbel also does not allow her to rise to the greatness of self-sacrifice at the end.

It is Wagner who gives Brünnhilde—this is his spelling—a truly tragic dimension and makes her a central figure in his four-part operatic cycle, *Der Ring der Nibelungen*, for which he composed both the libretto and the music (Fig. 11). The work had a long gestation period, beginning in 1848 at the time of the revolution, when Wagner too hoped for a new, democratic Germany. He began work with a prose sketch of *Siegfrieds Tod* ('Siegfried's Death'), concluding his work in 1874 with Act III of *Götterdämmerung* ('Twilight of the Gods').<sup>91</sup> *Die Walküre* ('The Valkyrie') was completed in 1856, and the entire *Ring* was first performed in August 1876 in Bayreuth. Wagner's Brünnhilde is the daughter of Wotan by Erda. She is a 'Walküre' (stress on the first syllable) or Valkyrie, that is, one of a group of warrior maidens who roam the battlefields and take dead heroes up to Valhalla, the place of the fallen heroes. Wagner has taken these figures from the *Volsunga Saga*, on which the entire *Ring* cycle is heavily based, and has invented names for them: Waltraute, Ortlinde, Rossweisse, Schwertleite, Gerhilde, Siegrune, Grimerde, and Helmwig. In *Die Walküre*, Part II of the cycle, Brünnhilde, Wotan's favourite daughter, saves Sieglinde, pregnant with

<sup>90</sup> Christa Agnes Tuczay, 'Geschlechtermodelle in Hebbels *Nibelungen* im Vergleich zum *Nibelungenlied*', in Ester Saletta and Christa Agnes Tuczay (eds.), *Das Weib im Manne zieht ihn zum Weibe; der Mann im Weibe trotzt dem Mann!*. Geschlechterkampf oder Geschlechterdialog: Friedrich Hebbel aus der Perspektive der Genderforschung (Berlin: Weidler, 2008), 245–65.

<sup>91</sup> See Peter Wapnewski, *Weißt du wie das wird...? Richard Wagner 'Der Ring des Nibelungen'*. Erzählt, erläutert und kommentiert (Munich, Zurick: Piper, 1995), 32–3. Norbert Müller compares Hebbel's and Wagner's versions of the Nibelung material in his *Die Nibelungendichter Hebbel und Wagner* (Essen: Frohn Verlag, 1991).



Figure 11. Amalia Materna (1844–1918) as the first Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* performed at Bayreuth in 1876.

Siegfried by her own twin brother Siegmund, against Wotan's express command, and thus enables Siegfried to be born. As a punishment for her disobedience Brünnhilde is imprisoned on a rock, encircled with fire, to become the bride of whichever man can break through the flames. *Die Walküre* ends with the moving farewell that Wotan bids Brünnhilde. The man who surmounts the flames to awaken Brünnhilde on her mountain-top is Siegfried, the eponymous hero of the opera that bears his name, the third part of the cycle. When Brünnhilde and Siegfried meet in Act III of *Siegfried* they become one in a night of love and passion. From an unthinking boy, Siegfried becomes a man. He places the ring of the Nibelungs (who in Wagner's mythology are a dwarfish people) on Brünnhilde's finger as a token of their union, and she gives him her runes to protect him. But Siegfried is a hero, therefore a restless being who has to go on to achieve further deeds of derring-do, so this opera ends with the farewell between the lovers. *Götterdämmerung*, the fourth and longest part of the cycle, takes material from the *Nibelungenlied* and relates how Siegfried drinks the magic potion, forgets Brünnhilde, and falls in love with Gutrune (as Kriemhild is called here), Gunther's sister. Hagen is the evil genius behind the doings of Gunther and Gutrune. He knows that Siegfried is already promised to Brünnhilde, but engineers things so that Siegfried goes again to the mountain-top, in the guise of Gunther, forcibly takes Brünnhilde, removes the ring from her finger, and brings her to Gunther in exchange for Gutrune. When she arrives at the court of the Gibichungs, as the noble clan is called by Wagner, Brünnhilde is forced not only to realize that her great love Siegfried has forgotten her, but also that he betrayed her by disguising himself as Gunther. When all this becomes public Gunther too feels dishonoured, so the only course of action, again promoted by Hagen, is to kill Siegfried. Before Hagen kills him he gives Siegfried another magic potion which brings back the memory of Brünnhilde and their love. At the moment of his death Siegfried relives that wonderful meeting on the mountain-top and, rather than being the pawn of Hagen, becomes himself again at his noblest and best. Brünnhilde now claims her spouse, telling Gutrune that Siegfried was hers before ever he saw Gutrune, and has Siegfried's funeral pyre prepared. Brünnhilde accuses Wotan of being responsible for the downfall of the world and ultimately of the hero Siegfried; she takes the ring from Siegfried's hand, places it on her own, and—in order to purify it in the flames of the funeral pyre, rid it of its curse, and return it to the Rhine-maidens from whom it came—she leaps onto

Siegfried's horse Grane and rides into the flames. As she does so, she proclaims her love: 'Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh / Selig grüßt dich dein Weib!' ('Siegfried! Siegfried! Joyously, joyously, your wife greets you!'). The music at the end holds out some hope of salvation for a world in ruins, brought about by the self-sacrifice of the warrior maiden Brünnhilde.

In all his writings Wagner never mentioned Fouqué's *Held des Nordens*, though he spoke at length about his sources. However, it has been demonstrated that there is a close correspondence in numerous places between Wagner and Fouqué.<sup>92</sup> Be that as it may, Wagner has created an operatic work which is so compelling, which portrays and evokes such stirring emotions, and has written such overwhelming music that it is easy to be swept along by it. If we look objectively at Brünnhilde, however, we see that, though she is a warrior maiden and appears wearing armour, her outstanding quality is the expression of those emotions that are connoted female. She feels compassion for Sieglinde, love for Siegfried, hurt and betrayal for herself, and finally overwhelming grief at Siegfried's death. She leaps into the flames in the same way that Wanda leaps into the Weichsel and so, like Wanda, joins Siegfried in a love-death.

Paul Ernst's drama *Brunhild* (1909) resembles Geibel's *Brunhild* most closely.<sup>93</sup> Ernst has only seven speaking-parts, two of which are a watchman and a maid who function as a kind of chorus, and the action takes place in one day, the day after Siegfried slept with Brunhild on behalf of Gunther. At the heart of Ernst's play is Brunhild's sense of becoming truly a woman after her night with Siegfried. 'Du machtest mich zum Weib' ('you made me a woman'), she says to Gunther, thinking he is the one who tamed her.<sup>94</sup> All the more painful is her sense of shame and dishonour when she realizes that she is married to a man as weak as Gunther and that she was once Siegfried's bride on the mountain-top. Chriemhild and Gunther are both knowing deceivers and liars in this play. They knew from the start that Siegfried and Brunhild were one and, because Gunther wanted Brunhild for himself, they deliberately gave Siegfried the magic potion to make him forget. Brunhild has to get Hagen to kill Siegfried who, as he expires, thanks them both for releasing him

<sup>92</sup> Friedrich Panzer first demonstrated the similarities in 1907 in his essay 'Richard Wagner and Fouqué', *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* (1907), 157–94, and Schmidt too examines the evidence in 'Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's Nibelungen-Trilogie', 139–50.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Ernst, *Brunhild, Trauerspiel in drei Aufzügen* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1936).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 19.



**Figure 12.** Hanna Ralph (1885–1978) as Brünhild in Fritz Lang's film *Siegfried's Death* (1924) conveys this heroic quality very well.

from the world through death, and Brunhild then stabs herself with Siegfried's sword. Hagen places Siegfried and Brunhild together on the funeral pyre, with Siegfried's sword between them. In this play, the Nibelungs (Chriemhild and Gunther) are despicable, while Siegfried and Brunhild are heroic figures who choose death as a way of returning to the heroic sphere (Fig. 12).

In his *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* ('The Germans and their Myths') Herfried Münkler provides a persuasive account of how, from the beginning of the nineteenth century on, the *Nibelungenlied* became the Germans' national epic, how it was used to inculcate a readiness to die for one's comrades even in a lost cause, just as the Nibelungs did, how Siegfried became identified with Germany, and how his death by a spear in the back became subsumed into the so-called 'Dolchstoßlegende' ('the legend of the stab in the back') at the end of World War I.<sup>95</sup> Münkler also shows how the rhetoric of the *Nibelungenlied* was used again and again, particularly in times of war: the 'Siegfried Line' was the name given to the German front line during World War I; the Germans hoped for the 'Siegfrieden', that is for a peace based on their victory, punning on Siegfried's name; various World War I offensives were called, for instance, the 'Hagen attack' ('der Hagenangriff') and the 'ride of the Valkyries' ('der Walkürenritt'); and there is, of course, Göring's characterization of the Battle of Stalingrad in World War II as the fight to the death in Attila's Hall in the last part of the *Nibelungenlied*. Faithfulness—'Treue'—was, according to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentators, the pre-eminent virtue of the Germans. Gustav Roethe (1859–1926), professor of German Studies at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin, and already quoted in Chapter 1 as a mouthpiece for the typical attitudes of his period, gave a speech in 1923 on the subject of 'Deutsche Treue in Dichtung und Sage' ('German Faithfulness in Literature and Myth'), in which he shows it to be a major subject of German literature from the earliest times and puts Kriemhild, Siegfried's widow, forward as an exemplar of 'Treue'.<sup>96</sup>

But how does Brünhild fit into all this? She does so because such artists as Geibel and Wagner transmute her too into an exemplar of 'Treue'. Rather than being the warrior queen who strives to the last to keep her pride, her honour, and her sense of self intact, and who is prepared to destroy the hero Siegfried to do so, she is depicted as remaining faithful to her love for Siegfried and dying in order to join him beyond the grave. In Geibel's *Brünhild* she addresses Siegfried's corpse in a speech full of forgiveness and love, before stabbing herself with his dagger, saying: 'Durch Blut und Flammen führt der Pfad hinaus, / Du gingst voran, ich folge—' ('The path leads out through blood and flames. You went ahead, I follow').<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), 69–107.

<sup>96</sup> Gustav Roethe, 'Deutsche Treue in Dichtung und Sage', in *Deutsche Reden* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1927), 19–47, 30.

<sup>97</sup> Geibel, *Brünhild*, 154.

In Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* her last words, as we saw, are: 'Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh! / Selig grüßt dich dein Weib!', before she leaps into the flames.<sup>98</sup> Wagner's Brünnhilde, like Werner's Wanda, sacrifices herself for the man she loves and, even though he wronged her, she removes the curse of the ring through her faithfulness. In his retelling of the Germanic myths for old and young, composed together with his wife Therese, née baroness von Droste-Hülshoff, and first published in 1884, Felix Dahn (1834–1912) ascribes to Brünhild the three virtues of 'Frauenliebe, Treue, Heldentum' ('womanly love, faithfulness, heroism'), and he mentions the Valkyries in the same breath as the brave Germanic women and girls 'welche heldenhaft des Gatten, des Geliebten, des Bruders Geschick, kämpfend bis in den Tod, geteilt haben' ('who heroically share the fate of their husband, their lover, their brother, fighting to the death').<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, of course, what the *Nibelungenlied* shows is that women bring about the downfall of the world by their very existence. Dahn said as much in a much earlier poem, so perhaps marriage mellowed him: 'So sei'n verflucht die Weiber, Weib ist, was falsch und schlecht: | Hier um zwei weiße Leiber verdirbt Burgunds Geschlecht' ('Accursed be women, a woman is what is false and evil. The Burgundian dynasty is ruined for the sake of two white bodies').<sup>100</sup> Brünhild and Kriemhild, through the effect they have on men and through their own out-of-control emotions, fit well with the misogyny of the nineteenth century.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Wagner, *Die Musikdramen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1971), 814.

<sup>99</sup> Felix Dahn und Therese Dahn, geb. Freiin von Droste-Hülshoff, *Walhall. Germanische Götter- und Heldenlegenden für alt und jung am deutschen Herd erzählt* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1903), 167.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted from Münkler, *Die Deutschen*, 87.

# Judith: Asking the Big Questions

Of all the women warriors that this study examines, Judith is in many ways the most troubling. On the one hand she is the fearless woman who liberates her people, god-fearing, chaste, selfless. On the other, she murders a man at close quarters and in cold blood. She does not pay for this deed with her own death, nor is she subsequently brought into line by being placed under a man's authority in marriage. This Old Testament heroine has been imagined and represented over and over again in German culture from at least the Middle Ages to the present, as a considerable number of studies over the last eighty years have pointed out.<sup>1</sup> Though each age projects its own anxieties and fantasies onto the story,<sup>2</sup> German works before our own focus on three main questions: the gender question—how are we to understand the story in terms of male and female gender roles; the sex question—what happens between Judith and Holofernes in the tent *before* she kills him; and the murder question—can Judith's killing of an unarmed and defenceless man be justified as the heroic deed of a liberator or is it simply murder? The late twentieth century, with its experience of terrorism,

<sup>1</sup> See Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1927); Otto Baltzer, *Judith in der deutschen Literatur* (Berlin–Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1930); Martin Sommerfeld, *Judith-Dramen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Juncker und Dünnhaupt, 1933); Adelheid Straten, *Das Judith-Thema in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Ikonographie—Materialien und Beiträge* (Munich: Minerva, 1983); Mary Jacobus, 'Judith, Holofernes and the Phallic Woman', in *Reading Woman* (London: Methuen: 1986), 110–36; Gabrijela Mecky Zaragoza, 'Da befiehl sie Furcht und Angst...'. *Judith im Drama des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Iudicium, 2005); Marion Kobelt-Groch, *Judith macht Geschichte. Zur Rezeption einer mythischen Gestalt vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005); Ernst Osterkamp, 'Judith. Schicksale einer starken Frau vom Barock zur Biedermeierzeit', in Steffen Martus and Andrea Polaschegg (eds.), *Das Buch der Bücher—gelesen. Lesarten der Bibel in den Wissenschaften und Künsten* (Bern, Berlin, etc: Peter Lang, 2006), 171–95.

<sup>2</sup> Margarita Stocker, *Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1998).

has added another question: what does Judith's deed tell us about the justification or otherwise for terrorist killing?

## The gender question

The story of Judith is familiar to us today from the apocryphal Book of Judith in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament scriptures, itself probably based on an earlier tale from the third century BCE.<sup>3</sup> More than a third of the account in the Septuagint—six chapters out of sixteen—relates the expansionist ambitions of the Assyrians under Nebuchadnezar led by his general Holofernes.<sup>4</sup> Only the Israelites defy him by blockading the mountain passes against him. Symbolic of their resistance is the fictitious city of Bethulia, which is of particular military and strategic importance. Holofernes lays siege to it and cuts off the water supply, so that the inhabitants are dying of thirst. They decide that they can hold out for only five more days but will then have to surrender, so they set God a deadline.

In the city there lives the virtuous, rich, and beautiful widow, Judith, who has been mourning her dead husband Manasseh for three years and four months and who is shocked at the thought of surrender. She summons the two elders of the city and castigates them for putting God to the test, trying to bind him as though he were a human being (*Judith* 8: 11 f.), and failing to trust implicitly in Him. Judith reveals herself to be eloquent, wise, and resolute. When the elders have left, Judith puts on sackcloth and ashes and, in the prayer of a true warrior queen, calls on God to 'break the strength [of the Assyrians] by thy might and bring down their power in thy anger' (9: 8), 'send thy wrath upon their heads', and 'give to me a widow the strength to do what I plan' (9: 9).<sup>5</sup> She tells the elders that she has a plan and that she is going to the Assyrian camp.

<sup>3</sup> See Henrike Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith. Deutsche Judithdichtungen vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 17–23.

<sup>4</sup> As Karl-Josef Kuschel points out, there never was an Assyrian king called Nebuchadnezar. Nebuchadnezar was a Babylonian king (605–582 BC), but then the Book of Judith as a whole is consciously fictitious. See Karl-Josef Kuschel, 'Mord im Namen Gottes? Das Drama der Judith von Hebbel bis Hochhuth', *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*, 37 (2005), 103–25.

<sup>5</sup> The English translation of the Bible used here is *The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1966). The Book of Judith can be found on pp. 434–48. Quotations in the text are accompanied by chapter and verse numbers.

She then dresses herself in the jewels and rich clothes she had worn during her husband's lifetime but had no use for as a widow, takes her maid Abra with her, puts some food into a bag, and leaves the city for the enemy camp. She is captured and taken to Holofernes, who is immediately smitten with her beauty. She lies to him, telling him that she has come to betray her own people, and he is dazzled as much by her eloquence, her 'wisdom of speech' (11: 21), as by her beauty. He agrees to her leaving his camp unchallenged whenever she wants to bathe in the nearby stream to purify herself, and she is also allowed to go out into the desert to pray. On the fourth evening Holofernes can wait no longer, so filled with desire for her is he. He invites her to dinner in his tent, she pretends to be delighted, lies down at his feet on some soft fleeces, and he is moved, says the Bible, with great desire to possess her. Holofernes, however, drinks too much and falls into a deep sleep. Judith prays for strength, cuts Holofernes's head off with his own sword with two strokes, rolls his body out of the bed, and pulls down the bed-canopy. She brings the head to Abra, and they put it into a bag and leave the camp. When Judith arrives at Bethulia she shows the Israelites Holofernes's head and the canopy of the bed 'under which he lay in his drunken stupor', but, she stresses, 'it was my face that tricked him to his destruction, and yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me' (13: 16). Judith then orders the Bethulians to display the head on their city walls and vanquish the enemy. Again, her eloquence is striking. The Assyrians, in the meantime, have discovered the headless corpse and, leaderless, begin to panic. The Bethulians rush out of the city and attack and sack the Assyrian camp, bringing Holofernes's own silver vessels, beds, and furniture to Judith as trophies which she presents to the temple. She leads a processional dance, singing a great, seventeen-stanza song recounting her deed and praising the lord. Judith remains a chaste widow for the rest of her life—she lives to be 105—and is honoured by the Bethulians as their liberator.

This story addresses the question of gender roles full on. A woman is presented as a commander in a war situation, plotting the overthrow of the enemy and thinking out a plan to raise the siege. She does so in contrast to the Bethulian men, who are faint-hearted and planning to surrender. It is Judith, not they, who sees the further consequences of surrender: if they give in, all Judaea will be laid waste. She alone has the courage to leave the besieged city, go into the enemy camp unarmed, and carry out her bold plan. In the central episode she is credited with sufficient physical strength to lift Holofernes's

sword and slice off his head with only two strokes. When she returns to Bethulia with Holofernes's head she again acts like a general, telling the Bethulians what to do with the head and how to fight the Assyrians. It is she who fittingly intones a great victory song to the lord after the Assyrians have been defeated ('I will sing unto the Lord a new song', 16: 13).

The Judith story was well known during the German Middle Ages, as Lähnemann shows, but our discussion begins with the Reformation. In this period, whether Judith is represented as a virago very much depends on which version of the biblical story each author used. Lähnemann demonstrates that the version early modern Germans knew was not the Septuagint but Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate, and that it is on the Vulgate version that such sixteenth-century German translations as Leo Jud's Zurich Bible, completed by at least 1529, and Luther's, completed by 1534, are based.<sup>6</sup> The translation of the Book of Judith in Luther's Bible (not by Luther himself, incidentally) is not only much shorter than the Septuagint, but some central aspects relating to Judith herself are different, and vitally alter the way she is represented. Where the Judith of the Septuagint is powerfully eloquent, in the Vulgate and consequently in Luther's Bible her speeches are much shorter and her eloquence has a different purpose. In the Septuagint, when she is praying for strength to go out and smite the enemy, she says: 'By the deceit of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant; crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman' (9: 10), and 'Make my deceitful words to be their wound and stripe' (9: 13). In other words, Judith's tongue is her sword. These passages are missing in Luther's version, so that the masterful woman of the Septuagint is already diminished in stature.

The status of the 'Book of Judith' is also diminished in Luther's Bible. Luther shows himself in his 'Vorrede auff das Buch Judith' ('Preface to the Book of Judith') to be rather doubtful as to its historical accuracy and its origins. The story of the siege of Bethulia does not fit in very well with Jewish history as related in other books of the Bible, he writes ('Aber es wil sich schwerlich reimen mit den Historien der heiligen Schrift / sonderlich mit Jeremia vnd Esra').<sup>7</sup> So Luther comes to the conclusion that this is a

<sup>6</sup> Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*, also discusses the approximately six versions of the story in German from the eleventh century up into the fifteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> D. Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsche* (Wittenberg, 1545), ed. Hans Volz, assisted by Heinz Blanke (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972). The Book of Judith is in ii. 1674–98.

literary work ('ein geistlich schön Geticht'—'a beautiful spiritual literary work') and best taken as an allegory or parable.<sup>8</sup> To this day, while the Book of Judith forms part of the so-called deutero-canonical books in the Roman Catholic Bible, it does not form part of the Protestant Bible. Luther explicitly presented the Judith story as suitable material for the stage, first in his Preface to the Book of Tobias ('Judith gibt eine gute, ernste, tapfere Tragödien') and again in his Preface to the Book of Judith:

Vnd mag sein / das sie [die Juden] solch Geticht gespielt haben / Wie man bey vns die Passio spielt / vnd ander Heiligen geschicht. Da mit sie jr Volck vnd die Jugent lereten / als in einem gemeinen Bilde oder Spiel / Gott vertrawen / from sein / vnd alle hülffe vnd trost von Gott hoffen / in allen nötzen / wider alle Feinde etc.<sup>9</sup>

And it may be that they [the Jews] acted out such a literary work, in the same way that we act out the Passion and other sacred stories, so that their people and young people should learn, as in a common picture or play, to trust in God, be pious and hope for all help and comfort from God in all hours of need and against all enemies.

In this Preface to the Book of Judith, Luther says that Judith stands for the Jewish people and Holofernes for all enemies of the godly. Enemies of the godly can then be variously interpreted, according to the author's standpoint, as the devil (so Judith prefigures the Virgin Mary), the Turks, or the Church in Rome.

But writers and artists still have to decide how to deal with the fact that Judith does what no woman should do; in other words, that she acts like a man. In the first of two Judith plays by Sixt Birck (1501–54), the German version to be performed in Basel in 1534 by the school of which he was headmaster, Birck's solution is to say simply that she has become a man.<sup>10</sup> In this play, Ozias says after Judith's deed: 'Fraw Judith hat thon wie ain man' ('Judith acted like a man'),<sup>11</sup> the Bethulian women talk about Judith's 'helden leib' ('body of a hero') and 'manlichkeit' ('manliness'),<sup>12</sup> while the high priest Joachim firmly states: 'Fraw Judith . . . ist kain fraw / sy ist ain man' ('Judith is no woman, she is a man').<sup>13</sup> Judith's deed is also described

<sup>8</sup> Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsche*, 1675.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sixtus Birck, *Judith Ain Nutzliche History / durch ain herrliche Tragödi / in spilßweijß für die augen gestelt / Dienlichen / Wie man in Kriegßlüfftten / besonders so man von der ehr Gots wegen angefochten wirt / umb hilff zü Gott dem Herren flehend rüffen soll* (composed 1534, published 1539). Quoted from Sixt Birck, *Sämtliche Dramen*, ed. Manfred Brauneck with Hildegard Brauneck, vol. 2: *Die deutschen Stücke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 55–165.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 154.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 161.

as a knightly one ('Ritterschaft' is the term used). Lähnemann shows that, because Birck takes the Zurich Bible as his source, he restores Judith's 'manliness', which the Luther Bible excises.<sup>14</sup> Judith's dangerous switching of gender roles is acceptable because it is set within a wider framework of collective patrician government in Bethulia (to be understood as Basel). The deliberations of the Council of the Elders make up half the play, for instance, showing how difficult it is to govern when the people ('der gmaine man', 'the common man') become restive and fearful. Judith does not appear until halfway through, and her widowhood is down-played, because as such she would fit less well into Birck's vision of the patrician family.<sup>15</sup> Birck draws out a lesson for every section of society at the end—priests, those in high authority, council members, the common man, fathers of families, women, servants, and citizens. The lesson that women should learn is not that they should shoulder their menfolk aside when the latter are fearful, but that they should rather stiffen the men's nerve.

Other early modern plays stress that Judith, the widow, has been given strength by God, who, in His care for his Chosen People, is even prepared to use a weak woman as his instrument.<sup>16</sup> Birck's Latin *Judith*, written to be performed in Augsburg in 1537, also by the pupils of a school of which he was headmaster, configures Bethulia this time as the Free City of Augsburg and, as the title suggests, employs a great deal of republican rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> The play is in the main a translation from his own original German play, but has been considerably extended, as a result of Birck's recourse to the account in the Septuagint.<sup>18</sup> Where, in the German version, Ozias called Judith a man, in the Latin version he says rather that God has given her a strong arm to carry out her deed. Joachim Greff (1536),<sup>19</sup> Hans Sachs (1551),<sup>20</sup> Cornelius

<sup>14</sup> See the extensive discussion of Birck's *Judith* plays in Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*, 315–70. She points out that even the references in the Vulgate to the manly ('viriliter') actions of Judith have been excised in the Lutheran version, and the virago instead becomes a benefactress.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 341.

<sup>16</sup> Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, 'Judith und ihre Schwestern. Konstanz und Veränderung von Weiblichkeitssymbolen', in Annette Kuhn und Bea Lundt (eds.), *Lustgarten und Dämonenpein. Konzepte von Weiblichkeit in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 1997), 343–85, 347.

<sup>17</sup> Sixtus Birck, *Judith Drama comicotragicum. Exemplum Reipublice recte institutae. Unde discitur, quomodo arma contra Turcam sint capienda* (Augsburg: Ulhardus, 1539).

<sup>18</sup> Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*, 358.

<sup>19</sup> Joachim Greff, *Tragödie des Buchs Judith inn Deudsche Reim verfasset* (Wittemberg: Rhau, 1536).

<sup>20</sup> Hans Sachs, 'Wie Judith dem Thiranen Holoferno das Haupt abschlug vor der Stat Bethulia', in *Lieder, Gedichte, Spiele* (Essen: Phaidon, 1987), 690.

Schoneaeus (1594),<sup>21</sup> and Martin Böhme (1618)<sup>22</sup> follow the same line, that is, that God gives a weak widow the strength to vanquish the oppressor because she has faith.

Martin Opitz (1597–1639), however, comes back to the idea of Judith as a man. His *Judith* is an opera libretto, only the second in German, and is a translation from the Italian libretto *Giuditta* by Andrea Salvadori (1626).<sup>23</sup> Opitz tells us in the dedication to Margaretha von Kolowrath that his play deals with the three themes of ‘Ehr Gottes . . . die Liebe deß Vatterlands / und die Handhabung der keuschheit’ (‘the honour of God, the love of the fatherland, and the employment of chastity’).<sup>24</sup> Judith, he writes, exhibits ‘das Mannliche Hertz in einem Weiblichen Leibe’ (the heart of a man in a woman’s body).<sup>25</sup> After her deed Judith links herself not just to Jael but also to David,<sup>26</sup> and praises God: ‘Der auch ein Weibesbild zum Manne machen kan’ (‘who can also make a woman into a man’).<sup>27</sup> Opitz’s Judith lives on in Andreas Tscherning’s reworking of this libretto (he added two additional acts to make up his version, which appeared in 1646) and in Christian Rose’s reworking of Tscherning’s version in his play *Holofern* (1648).<sup>28</sup> The manly Judith is a *femme forte*, only possible in a system which conceives of only one sex.<sup>29</sup> She is the exceptional, and therefore rare, woman who has moved up the continuum from weak female to strong male and who can therefore exhibit manly qualities without overturning the entire gender order.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cornelius Schonaeus, ‘Ivditha’, in *Terentius Christianus, seu comoediae sacrae sex* (Heidelberg: Sanctandreas, 1594).

<sup>22</sup> Martin Böhme, *Tragicoedia. Ein Schön Teutsch Spiel / Vom Holofeme vnd der Judith* (Wittenberg: n.pub., 1618).

<sup>23</sup> The composer is Marco Gagliano. The libretto was published in *Martini Opiti Geistliche poemata, Von ihm selbst anjetzo zusammen gelesen / vervessert und absonderlich heraus gegeben. In Verlegung David Müllers Buchhändlers S. Erben*. 1638. Opitz’s *Judith* had probably been composed by 1628 (see Mara Wade, ‘The Reception of Opitz’s *Judith* During the Baroque’, *Daphnis*, 16 (1987), 147–65), but was not published until 1635.

<sup>24</sup> Opitz, *Martini Opiti Geistliche poemata*, 88.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 109.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 115.

<sup>28</sup> Andreas Tscherning, *Martin Opitzen Judith / Auffs new aussgefertiget; worzu der vordere Theil der Historie sampt den Melodeyen auf ieduedes chor begyfiget von Andreas Tscherning* (Rostock: Wilde, Richel, 1646); Christian Rose, *Holofern . . . allen des Teutsch-Landes Friedens-Störern und Blut-gierigen Kriegern in einem lustigen Schauspiel zur anderen Probe der Rhetorischen Mutter-Spraache vorgetzellet. In welchem (nebst vielen wol-merklichen Lehr-Puncten und Seufftzerlein/ die in bedrängten Zeiten zugebrauchen) auch etzlich anmutige concerten / von 3 Stimmen / sampt einen Basso Continuo / sein mit-einverleitet / so dem Werck gleichsam eine Seele geben!* (Hamburg: Rebenlein, 1648).

<sup>29</sup> See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> See Bettina Baumgärtel and Silvia Neysters (eds.), *Die Galerie der Starken Frauen: Regentinnen, Amazone, Salondamen* (Munich–Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1995).

Faith is the key here, for it can move mountains and enable even a weak woman to be a hero and warrior. Judith's transgressive behaviour, her flouting of gender norms, can be made acceptable by turning her into a personification of courage, resolution, trust in God, chastity, and humility, and by saying that she was not acting as an individual but under divine authority.

But if Judith carries out her killing of Holofernes because God has turned her into a man, she manages to be alone with him in the first place because she is a beautiful woman whom Holofernes desires. Her femininity and sexuality are just as important in her defeat of Holofernes as her manly courage and strength. She gains access to Holofernes by deliberately using her beauty to seduce him, dressing in her most beautiful clothes and jewels. She is a widow, which means that she is sexually experienced, but her sexuality is not under masculine control. She is childless, so her sexuality has not been tamed by motherhood. In her seductive and beguiling beauty, she resembles Eve. In duping Holofernes in order to destroy him, she resembles Delilah and, like Delilah, she emasculates a supposedly strong man. Like Salome, she is a clever woman manipulating a weak man who does not have his passions under control, and her reward and trophy is a man's head. In the central episode in Holofernes's tent, the woman is the killer and the man is the victim, because the woman is able to use reason while the man is overcome by his sexual desire and his love of alcohol. Luther's Bible translation had already made clear that Judith's weapon is her seductive beauty, working on Holofernes through his gaze: 'Straffe jren hohmut durch jr eigen schwert / Das er mit seinen eigen augen gefangen werde / wenn er mich ansihet' ('Punish their pride with their own sword, so that he will be entrapped through his own eyes when he sees me').<sup>31</sup> Holofernes's desire, his male gaze, will bring about his downfall.

Though early modern authors had a difficult task in reconciling the seductive Judith who deliberately set out to attract Holofernes with the chaste Judith who stressed that she 'was not defiled' on her return to Bethulia, it still came more naturally to them to depict Judith as a seductress rather than as a warrior.<sup>32</sup> Birck has Judith pray to God that Holofernes shall

<sup>31</sup> Luther, *Biblia*, 1688.

<sup>32</sup> Gabrijela Mecky Zaragoza shows how Marko Marulić's Judaeo-Spanish *Judita* of 1501 makes Judith asexual and chaste, in contrast to Birck's *Judith* of 1534. See Gabrijela Mecky Zaragoza, 'Virgo und Virago: Zwei frühneuzeitliche Judith-Figuren im Vergleich', in *Daphnis*, 31 (2002), 107–26.

'fall dann in die strick der lieb / als bald er mich anblick // Das ich in durch der liebe kuß ertödten mög' ('fall into the toils of love as soon as he sees me, so that I can kill him with the kiss of love').<sup>33</sup> In 1536 Joachim Greff uses verbatim the biblical passage quoted above about Judith ensnaring Holofernes through his eyes, and then goes out of his way to show Judith flirting outrageously with Holofernes and flattering him at every turn. They wash their hands simultaneously at the same basin, she brings him more to drink, she calls him 'lieber Herr' ('dear Lord'), and, in an interesting inversion, she even eats an apple proffered by Holofernes, thus making a direct link to Eve.<sup>34</sup> In 1551 Hans Sachs too depicts Judith as a seductress, praying 'Das er in meiner schön werd gfangen // Und in meinem strick bleib phangen' ('that he may be caught by my beauty and be trapped in my snares').<sup>35</sup> If Judith cannot convince Holofernes that she is prepared to succumb to his advances, he is not likely to shut himself away with her in his tent. It is, therefore, easy to assign Judith a place among what were called the 'Weiberlisten', exemplars of the cunning of women.

The belief in a divine mandate for Judith enabled the virago and the seductress to be kept in balance throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in a series of Jesuit plays, oratorios, and operas.<sup>36</sup> But this begins to break down by the late eighteenth century, with the growth of secularism on the one hand and the elaboration of a binary distinction between man and woman, based on the sexual act, on the other. In addition, this is the period when the idea of the 'Geschlechtscharaktere' or fixed gender roles for men and women was elaborated, as explained in Chapter 1. The Swiss writer Heinrich Keller (1778–1862) sets out directly to counter these views in 1809 in his verse drama *Judith*.<sup>37</sup> On 2 April 1808 he writes in his diary:

Nun habe ich ein Stück zu Ehren der Frauen geschreiben; unzufrieden mit der elenden Darstellung weiblicher Wesen in Romanen und Comödien, wolte ich die

<sup>33</sup> Birck, *Judith*, 115.

<sup>34</sup> Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*, 379 and 463.

<sup>35</sup> Sachs, 'Wie Judith dem Thirannen Holoferno', 69.

<sup>36</sup> See the catalogues of works given by Purdie, *The Story of Judith*, and Baltzer, *Judith in der deutschen Literatur*, and the anthology 'Ich bin Judith': Zur Rezeption eines mythischen Stoffes, ed. Marion Kobelt-Groch (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Heinrich Keller, *Judith. Schauspiel von Heinrich von Itzenloe, Hofpoet bey Kaiser Rudolf II. Aus einer alten Handschrift* (Zurich: Orell, Füllli, 1809).

Ehre der Frauen verfechten, da ich so viele der Vortrefflichsten ihres Geschlechtes kannte.<sup>38</sup>

I have now written a play in honour of women; dissatisfied with the miserable representation of female beings in novels and comedies, I wanted to defend women's honour, since I knew so many excellent examples of their sex.

To do this Keller invents a pseudonym for himself, Heinrich von Itzenlohe, said to be the court poet to Emperor Rudolf II, who reigned from 1576 to 1612. The choice of such a pseudonym is no accident. Horrified by Napoleon's occupation of Rome, where Keller—a sculptor as well as a writer—was living at the time, he is linking himself to the Holy Roman Empire which Napoleon has just dissolved. Germans need a liberator from a foreign aggressor, just as the Bethulians did. His Judith, therefore, is both the heroic liberator of her people, threatened by a tyrant, and the embodiment of woman's rebellion against denigration and enslavement.

All the men in the play are depicted as slaves to their sexual desires. This applies just as much to the Bethulians as to the Assyrians, just as much to Eliab, the heroic Bethulian, as to the evil aggressor Holofernes. 'Schmachten' ('languishing') is the word that Judith constantly uses of the men who have only to see her to want her. Her beauty arouses desire in men wherever she is, and thus causes chaos. In Bethulia itself all the men, of any age, want to possess her, and fight over her until they shed blood. When Judith appears, thirty-nine pages into the play, she mocks the Bethulian men, their desire, and their wish to make women their subjects:

Höhnisch lachte stets mein Mund,  
Seufzen sie von Liebe wund.  
Seht dann, ob des Weibes Wille  
Unterthänig oder frey;  
Ob sie in demüthiger Stille,  
Wann ihr winkt, euch Sklavin sey,  
Oder lacht der Tiranney?  
Herr'n der Schöpfung! Große Geister,  
Die ihr euch so kühn erfrecht,  
Nennt euch unsrer Seelen Meister;  
Nur in Machtgeboten sprecht—  
Rächen will ich mein Geschlecht [...]   
Schmachtet, Sklaven, in den Staub!

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from Mecky Zaragoza, 'Da befiehl sie Furcht und Angst . . .', 80. Her interpretation of Keller's play is rather different to mine.

My mouth always laughed mockingly when they sighed and suffered for love. See, then, whether the will of a woman will be subject or free; whether she will be your slave whenever you lift a finger or whether she laughs at tyranny. Lords of creation! Great spirits, who have the nerve to call yourselves the masters of our souls and only speak in commands—I want to avenge my sex [...] Languish, slaves, in the dust!

Since Judith is a widow, the solution of the governor of Bethulia to the unrest her beauty is causing among the men is to marry her off. They are so distracted by Judith's charms that they cannot fight. But for Judith marriage is tyranny: 'Ist die Herrschaft noch so milde, / Bleibt sie immer Tiranne' ('No matter now mild the dominion, it is always tyranny'),<sup>39</sup> and her first marriage came about because she was forced into it by means of 'ein strenges Machtgebot' ('a harsh exercise of power').<sup>40</sup> Only barbarians sacrifice a woman before embarking on some great enterprise, she says.

While the elders are debating on a solution to the Assyrian siege, Judith comes up with her own plan, but before she can carry it out she has to cater for the sexual needs of Eliab, who is wildly in love with her. She does this by pairing him off with Recha, the timorous, typically feminine young woman she is mentoring, and, after they have gone off together, comments on Eliab's compliance with her plan in an extraordinary speech:

Indeß sie trunken Kuß um Küsse tauschen,  
Will ich mir Kampf, Tod und Gefahr bereiten.  
Schwach ist das Männerstreben, wie ihr Wollen;  
Leicht wandelbar verwerfen sie und wählen.  
Ein weiblich Herz kann wahre Kraft nur stählen;  
[...] nicht Angst, nicht furchtbar Grausen  
Setzt eines Weibes Wollen hemmend Schranken;  
Wenn selbst vor ihr der Hölle Ströme brausen,  
Fliehn nicht zurück die schüchternen Gedanken:  
Ist nur ihr Herz, vom Wollen erst entzündet,  
Wird sie begeistert mit der Hölle kriegen ...<sup>41</sup>

While they, intoxicated, exchange kisses, I will prepare myself for conflict, death and danger. Men's striving is weak like their will. Fickle, they discard and choose. True strength can only steel a woman's heart. Neither fear nor frightful horror can place a barrier in the way of a woman's will. Even when the streams of Hell rush past her, her timorous thoughts do not retreat. If once her heart is enflamed with purpose, she will fight Hell enthusiastically.

<sup>39</sup> Keller, *Judith*, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 130.

Men are the fickle ones, their will is weak, while women are courageous, steadfast, and firm of purpose. As a companion on her mission to the Assyrians Judith picks Delia, the innkeeper's wife, whose feistiness Judith had noted when she appeared in an earlier scene. Delia too thinks very little of marriage as an institution, because her drunken husband tried to beat her until she asserted herself: 'Mir [war] die Herrschaft übergeben, / Ihm die Tyranny genommen' ('dominion was given to me, tyranny was taken from him').<sup>42</sup> The scenes in Holofernes's camp show Judith to be an able seductress and killer. Her attraction for him is so strong that he calls her a 'Zauberin' ('a magician' or 'witch').<sup>43</sup> This, however, is not the innovative aspect of this play, which is rather Judith's emphasis on the dignity of women on her return to Bethulia with Holofernes's head:

Der Frauen Loos ist Dienstbarkeit hienieden;  
Doch hat euch frey von Sklaverey zu machen  
Der Herr des Himmels einem Weib beschieden.  
Ein Weib gebiert den Sieger einst des Drachen [...]]<sup>44</sup>

Woman's lot here below is servitude. Yet the lord of heaven has accorded the power to a woman to free you from slavery. A woman gives birth to the victor against the snake.

At this the Bethulians take up their weapons and rush out of the city to defeat the Assyrians. The heroic woman has made cowards into soldiers and enabled them to defeat the aggressor. Judith is here being aligned with Mary, and thereby being raised from the level of an ordinary woman to that of a semi-divine figure. As Eliab had said earlier to her: 'Prophetin, Göttin bist du, keine Frau' ('You are a prophetess, a goddess, not a woman').<sup>45</sup> This removes some of the emancipatory potential of Keller's heroine for real women, though Judith, the goddess, is balanced by the figure of Delia, who is just as much a critic of men and marriage and is very much a real woman. Keller's comprehensive critique of the institution of marriage, of men's lack of control over their own desires, and of their enslavement of women who are more admirable than them in every way makes the play into a counterblast to the kind of ideas about marriage and the nature of women promulgated by Humboldt or Fichte, while Judith's role as liberator chimes with other calls to smite the foreign aggressor.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 139.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 184.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 196.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 121.

In extreme contrast to this exploration of the gender question is the Austrian dramatist Johann Nestroy's *Judith und Holofernes* (1847), a parody of Hebbel's *Judith*. In Nestroy's comedy the figure of Judith is actually her cross-dressed brother Joab. Judith has been excised from her own story completely; the protagonist is a man, so there is no problem in explaining how this 'she' came to kill an enemy general.

## The sex question

The second question the Judith story poses is: what actually does happen in the tent before the killing? An erotic component is built into the story already in the Bible, for the central events, after all, take place in a bedroom. Luther's version, more clearly than the Septuagint, makes perfectly plain that Holofernes is inviting Judith to dinner in order to have sex with her: 'Denn es ist ein schande bey den Assyrern / das ein solch Weib solt vnbeschaffen von vns kommen / vnd einen Man genarret haben' ('For it is a shame on the Assyrians if we let such a woman go without sleeping with her and [so let her] make a fool of a man').<sup>46</sup> Later on, Luther's Bible tells us: 'Vnd Judith war allein bey jm in der Kamer. Da nu Holofernes im bette lag / truncken war vnd schlieff' ('Judith was alone with him in the chamber. Because Holofernes was now lying in bed and was drunk and asleep...').<sup>47</sup> By telling us that 'Holofernes was now lying in bed and was drunk and asleep', rather than explaining that he had to go to bed because he was drunk, our attention is drawn to what must have just happened between the two principal characters. After she has killed him, Judith pulls the corpse out of the bed and takes the bed-canopy with her. In Luther's Bible the word for canopy is 'Decke', which in German means both blanket and ceiling. The translator may have meant the reader to understand that she took the canopy with her, but anyone reading it, unless they knew the Greek original, would assume that a blanket was meant. So Judith takes as trophies Holofernes's head and the blanket from his bed. When Judith comes back to Bethulia she not only hangs his weapons up in the temple, she also hangs the 'blanket' there, so attention is again drawn to Holofernes's bed. This repeated focus on the bed almost forces us to bring sex into the story. The very fact that,

<sup>46</sup> Luther, *Biblia*, 1691.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 1692.

when Judith returns to Bethulia, she maintains that she has not been defiled introduces the idea of defilement to our minds. So at the heart of the Judith story is a sexual episode that, though not narrated, is very strongly suggested.

Early modern dramatists skip over the encounter in the tent. In Birck's German play, hardly have the servants been sent away than Judith appears with Holofernes's head. Hans Sachs does not show the banquet at all. Rather, in a short scene in front of the tent, the servants relate Holofernes's drunkenness. Judith prays for strength, and we immediately see her coming out of the tent with the head. But at least, in Sachs's version, when Judith is about to go to Holofernes's tent to have dinner with him on the fateful evening she knows that sex is on the cards, for Sachs has her beg God: 'Du erhalt mich sthet // Und beschütz mir mein weiblich ehr' ('Preserve me always and protect my womanly honour').<sup>48</sup> In Opitz's libretto there are many sly references to the erotic potential of the meeting between Judith and Holofernes. The chorus of Assyrian guards says of their commanding officer during the night after he has seen Judith, for instance: 'Der Feldherr liegt gefangen // Schifft auff der Venus See' ('The general lies a prisoner, is sailing on Venus's sea'),<sup>49</sup> and the meeting between Holofernes and Judith is described as being one between Mars and Venus.

Early modern dramatists, therefore, can hint but can never show us Holofernes and Judith as lovers. Contemporary German visual artists are able to convey the erotic aspect more directly. One example is an engraving by Hans Sebald Beham, after a work by his brother Barthel Beham, dating to 1547 (Fig. 13). The naked Judith—nakedness officially indicates chastity and innocence—sits in a niche.<sup>50</sup> In one hand she holds a sword, in the other Holofernes's head. His beard touches her thigh, her hand his hair, she gazes almost tenderly down at him. If his eyelids were not lowered, the pair would be looking deep into each other's eyes. Judith and Holofernes are alone together in a separate space, just as they were alone together in the tent. Judith is gently touching Holofernes's hair. Barthel Beham had already gone further in 1525 by depicting Judith sitting on the corpse of Holofernes, analogous to the motif of Phyllis riding

<sup>48</sup> Sachs, 'Wie Judith dem Thirannen Holoferno', 73.

<sup>49</sup> Opitz, *Martini Opiti Geistliche poemata*, 105.

<sup>50</sup> Judith Karstedt, 'Judith', in Gabriele Frohnhaus, Barbara Grotkamp-Schepers, and Renate Philipp (eds.), *Schwert in Frauenhand. Weibliche Bewaffnung* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 1998), 47–53.

• HOLOFERNI CAPVT DOMINVS  
ABSTVLIT PER MANVM IUDITH.

1545

SB



Figure 13. Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550) after Barthel Beham (1502–1540), *Judith with the head of Holofernes* (1545), copper engraving.

Aristotle (Fig. 14). The woman is dominating the man; the order of the sexes has been inverted. At the same time, the posture of the two naked people suggests a sexual act which has just taken place.<sup>51</sup> The sword between Judith's thighs points to Holofernes's genitals and yet again indicates an erotic connection between the two figures.<sup>52</sup> Judith's hand in Holofernes's hair also reminds us of Samson and Delilah, a couple with whom Judith and Holofernes are often linked. In this picture our gaze is directed to the two heads, both with lowered eyes. Gazes and eyes are another important motif in these erotic depictions of the Judith story, as we see in another engraving by Hans Sebald Beham (Fig. 15). What strikes us first is the phallic woman with the sword between her legs, the parallel forms of the sword and her right leg, hair and hand, and then the horizontal arm, which links the three heads. But then the eyes draw our attention: the three pairs of human eyes and the fourth pair, Judith's nipples. The dead gaze of Holofernes, like a Medusa, looks at Judith's naked breasts, Abra's suspicious gaze looks over at Judith, and she looks back towards the place where the deed—bloody and sexual—took place. In other depictions, for instance by Hans Baldung and Lucas Cranach the Elder, Judith is linked to Salome—as she was in Klimt's depictions from the early twentieth century (Figs. 7 and 8)—so that again an erotic and seductive element in Judith's personality is hinted at. This emphasis on eyes and the gaze reminds us that Judith's plan is based on ensnaring Holofernes through his eyes. The gaze represents his desire for her, and it is this gaze that makes her murderous deed possible. The gaze is what the German artists, unlike their Italian counterparts, represent and which enables them to indicate the physical contact between Judith and the man she has killed.

Nineteenth-century writers and artists pick up these hints and develop them radically. Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) was fascinated by the painting of Judith and Holofernes by Horace Vernet (1789–1863), exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1831. Vernet sets the scene in Holofernes's bedroom. He is lying asleep, half-naked, on the tousled bed. Judith, whose right shoulder and left arm are bare, looks as if she has dressed hastily. She is about to raise a huge scimitar against the sleeping man. Heine, commenting on the painting in Cotta's *Morgenblatt* on 29 October of that year, is quite

<sup>51</sup> Bettina Uppenkamp, *Judith und Holofernes in der italienischen Malerei des Barock* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), 82.

<sup>52</sup> Hammer-Tugendhat, 'Judith und ihre Schwestern', 363.



Figure 14. Barthel Beham (1502–1540) *Judith seated on the dead Holofernes* ((1525), copper engraving.



Figure 15. Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550), *Judith and Abra with the head of Holofernes* (1531–35), copper engraving.

clear that coitus has taken place, that Judith has just got up from the bed, and that she has been deflowered. According to Heine, Judith stands:

an der eben überschrittenen Grenze der Jungfräulichkeit, ganz gottrein und doch weltbefleckt, wie eine entweihte Hostie. . . Süße Wildheit, düstere Holdseligkeit und sentimentaler Grimm rieselt [sic] durch die edlen Züge der tödlichen Schönen.<sup>53</sup>  
 at the borderline of virginity which she has just crossed, completely divinely pure and yet soiled by the world, like a desecrated host. . . Sweet wildness, dark grace, and sentimental anger flow across the noble features of the deadly beauty.

Vernet's picture, therefore, shows us Judith just after she has seduced Holofernes and he has deflowered her, and before she kills him in his post-coital slumber. Heine's last sentence provides a gloss on these events: 'Welch ein beneidenswertes Ende! Wenn ich einst sterben soll, ihr Götter, laßt mich sterben wie Holofernes!' ('What an enviable end! When I come to die, ye Gods, let me die like Holofernes!')<sup>54</sup> This Judith's killing is motivated by her anger and to avenge her honour.

Friedrich Hebbel's play *Judith*, his first work for the stage, was premiered at the Hoftheater in Berlin on 6 July 1840, and develops this notion further. In what is arguably the most important and powerful German work to deal with the Judith story, Hebbel provides an extended exploration of gender roles, the nature of heroism, and the link between desire, sex, and violence. The play shows an unbridgeable polarity between the sexes and reveals male fears about female sexuality and desire, as well as about female autonomy. It is well documented that Hebbel's *Judith* was prompted by the call by the so-called 'Jungdeutschen' for women's emancipation in Germany.<sup>55</sup> For Hebbel, the very idea of this meant the unleashing of the forces of chaos. As he wrote in a letter:

Das Weib und die Sittlichkeit stehen in einem Verhältniß zu einander, wie heut zu Tage leider die Weiber und die Unsittlichkeit. [...] Die Gesellschaft hat sie emancipirt, statt, daß nur der Mann sie emancipiren sollte. Darin steckt die Wurzel alles Uebels. Für das Weib gehört der beschränkteste, der engste, Kreis. Für sie gerinnt das Welt-All in einen Tropfen zusammen.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Heinrich Heine, 'Horace Vernet', in Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 203.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> This connection has been analysed by, among others, Mecky Zaragoza, 'Da befiehl sie Furcht und Angst', and in Ester Saletta and Christa Agnes Tuczay (eds.), 'Das Weib im Manne zieht ihn zum Weibe; der Mann im Weibe trotzt dem Mann'. *Geschlechterkampf oder Geschlechterdialog: Friedrich Hebbel aus der Perspektive der Genderforschung* (Berlin: Weidler, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Quoted from Mecky Zaragoza, 'Da befiehl sie Furcht und Angst', 139.

Woman and morality stand in the same relation to each other as unfortunately women and immorality do today. [...] Society has emancipated them instead of the man alone emancipating them. This is the root of all evil. The most limited, the narrowest sphere is the proper one for women. For them the universe melts into one drop.

In another revealing statement about the relation between the sexes, Hebbel wrote in his diary: 'Das Weib muß nach der Herrschaft über den Mann streben, weil sie fühlt, daß die Natur sie bestimmt hat, ihm unterwürfig zu seyn' ('Woman must necessarily strive for dominion over man because she feels that nature has determined that she should be subordinate to him').<sup>57</sup> For Hebbel, Judith is a terrible example of a woman who oversteps the boundaries nature has set for her, and who first goes out of her way to attract her rapist, then submits to him, half-desiring him, and afterwards slaughters him out of revenge. Any woman who kills, no matter what the motive, is out of line for Hebbel—he was, for instance, initially repelled by Schiller's portrayal of Joan of Arc in his play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. In the same way, he could not accept the heroic Judith presented in the Bible. He wrote in his diary on 3 January 1840: 'Die Judith der Bibel kann ich nicht brauchen. Dort ist die Judith eine Witwe, die den Holofernes durch List und Schlauheit ins Netz lockt [...] das ist gemein' ('The Judith of the Bible is no use to me. There she is a widow who ensnares Holofernes by means of subterfuge and cunning [...] that is base').<sup>58</sup> In the preface to the play he calls Judith 'ein verschlagenes Weib' ('a duplicitous woman').<sup>59</sup> This means that, for him Judith is a murderer, as he makes clear in his essay *Mein Wort über das Drama!* ('My Thoughts on the Drama'): 'Die Judith der Bibel ist eben nichts, als eine Charlotte Corday, ein fanatisch-listiges Ungeheuer' ('The Judith of the Bible is nothing more than a Charlotte Corday, a fanatical and cunning monster').<sup>60</sup> As we shall see, many German writers considered Corday's killing of Marat to be an act of courage, but for Hebbel she is a crazed criminal. She can only become a tragic heroine if she suffers herself, says Hebbel, so he introduces a completely new element into the story, namely, that Judith fears at the end that she is pregnant. If she is

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 139–40.

<sup>58</sup> Hebbel, *Tagebücher*, in Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 245.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Hebbel, *Judith. Eine Tragödie in fünf Akten*, Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: Deutsche Literatur (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 72820–937, at 72920.

<sup>60</sup> Friedrich Hebbel, *Mein Wort über das Drama! Eine Erwidering an Professor Heiberg in Kopenhagen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1843), Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: Deutsche Literatur (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 74250–302, at 74266.

pregnant, then this will be a sign that her killing was not sanctioned by God and she will ask the high priest to kill her.

Hebbel, like Heine, makes the widow Judith into a virgin, as does the anonymous author of the 1818 Judith drama discussed below, and explains this by hinting at something resembling a spell enacted by the bridegroom's mother in the wedding chamber which makes him impotent on the wedding night (Fig. 16). Manasse dies six months later, the spell or taboo still unbroken. Hebbel's Judith can only be made complete by being penetrated by a man. As she says in Act II:

Ein Weib ist ein Nichts; nur durch den Mann kann sie etwas werden; sie kann Mutter durch ihn werden. Das Kind, das sie gebiert, ist der einzige Dank, den sie der Natur für ihr Dasein darbringen kann. Unselig sind die Unfruchtbaren, doppelt unselig bin ich, die ich nicht Jungfrau bin und auch nicht Weib!<sup>61</sup>

A woman is nothing; she can only become something through a man; she can become a mother through him. The child she bears is the only way that she can thank nature for her existence. Unhappy are unfruitful women, doubly unhappy am I, not a virgin and not a woman either.

As Hebbel himself puts it in his diary on 28 March 1840, when talking about Judith: 'Das Weib liebt in dem Mann etwas Höheres, das sie zu sich herabziehen will' ('Woman loves in man something higher which she wants to pull down to her level').<sup>62</sup> In the entry for 22 April of the same year he writes that Judith:

kommt zum Holofernes, sie lernt den 'ersten und letzten Mann der Erde' kennen, sie fühlt, ohne sich dessen klar bewußt zu werden, daß er der einzige ist, den sie lieben könnte, sie schaudert, indem er sich in seiner ganzen Größe vor ihr aufrichtet, sie will seine Achtung ertrotzen und gibt ihr ganzes Geheimnis preis, sie erlangt nichts dadurch, als daß er, der vorher schon mit ihr spielte, sie nun wirklich erniedrigt, daß er sie hohnend in jedem ihrer Motive mißdeutet, daß er sie endlich zu seiner Beute macht und ruhig einschläft.<sup>63</sup>

Judith comes to Holofernes, she makes the acquaintance of the 'first and last man on this earth' without becoming really conscious of the fact that he is the only man she can love. She shrinks when he rises up before her in all his greatness; she wants to win his respect by her defiance and surrenders all her mystery. She achieves nothing by this except that he, who played with her previously, now really humiliates her, that he mockingly misunderstands all her motives, that he finally makes her his prey and falls calmly asleep.

<sup>61</sup> Hebbel, *Judith*, 72848.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 245.

<sup>62</sup> Hebbel, *Tagebücher*, in Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 247.



Figure 16. Ferdinand Bender, Christine Enghaus as Judith in her husband Friedrich Hebbel's play of that name (1850), oil on canvas. Hebbel-Sammlung der Stadt Kiel.

The weak and cowardly Ephraim, whom Judith despises, is contrasted with Holofernes, brutal, ruthless, sexually rapacious, and contemptuous of women, but a man of stature and psychological complexity who, like a hero out of mythology, was raised in the cave of a lion and never knew his mother. He rapes Judith and, as Hebbel describes above, falls into a post-coital sleep. Judith recounts her own deflowering to her maid in Act V, appalled at what has happened to her, but horrified just as much by the awakening of her own desire. As she puts it, at the moment of defloration her senses, like drunken slaves who do not know their own master, rose up against her. Though she came to Holofernes's camp in the first place because the Bethulians were in need, and claims that her deed is a heroic one because it cost her so much, she kills Holofernes not to save her people but because of what he did to her personally: 'nichts trieb mich, als der Gedanke an mich selbst' ('nothing drove me but the thought of myself').<sup>64</sup> As Freud says in his discussion of Hebbel's *Judith* in his 1918 essay 'Das Tabu der Virginität', already quoted in Chapter 1: 'Judith [ist] das Weib, das den Mann kastriert, von dem sie defloriert wurde' ('Judith is the woman who castrates the man who deflowered her').<sup>65</sup>

Mecky Zaragoza interprets the link that is made here between women as sexual beings and women as seductresses and potential castrators as betraying a deep level of male fear and unease. She relates the three Judith plays by Keller, the anonymous author of 1818 (see below), and Hebbel to Rohde-Dachser's theory of containment, whereby constructions of femininity act as containers for what masculinity collectively rejects by pouring it into culturally acceptable forms.<sup>66</sup> Alexandra Tischel takes a broader approach, seeing the play as depicting the struggle between polytheism, masculinity, courage, the phallus, and the myth of the hero, as represented by Holofernes, and monotheism, femininity, cunning, virginity, and sensuality, as represented by Judith.<sup>67</sup>

The final development of this strand in the representation of Judith is to be found in another play, *Die jüdische Witwe* ('The Jewish Widow') by Georg Kaiser, first written in 1904 and revised in 1908/9.<sup>68</sup> Kaiser totally demolishes the heroic Judith. Instead of a thinking, courageous, adult woman we have a child of 12, later 13, who is wholly at the mercy, first of her family, and then of her own desire to be deflowered. She has no idea of saving the city, does not

<sup>64</sup> Hebbel, *Judith*, 72925.

<sup>65</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Das Tabu der Virginität' (1918), in Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 256.

<sup>66</sup> Mecky Zaragoza, 'Da befiehl sie Furcht und Angst', 145.

<sup>67</sup> Tischel, *Tragödie der Geschlechter*, 53–64.

<sup>68</sup> Georg Kaiser, *Die jüdische Witwe. Bühnenspiel in fünf Akten*, in *Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt–Berlin, Vienna: Propyläen Verlag, 1971).

set out to find Holofernes, and kills him by accident. All she wants is to find a man to sleep with her. The first act depicts Judith being dragged by her relatives into the temple to be forcibly married off to the aged, senile, and impotent Manasse. All she manages to say in this act is the single ineffectual word ‘no’, nine times. In the second act, though married, she is still a virgin. Her bald husband, with his scraggy beard, takes his pleasure by looking on, salivating, when she is in the bath. At the same time he is on the watch for any sign that, in desperation, she will take a lover. Judith suffocates him with a pillow off-stage—in an almost offhand way. She is therefore a murderer before ever she encounters Holofernes, but is also the virginal widow posited by Heine and Hebbel and now even more desperate to be deflowered. She vainly tries to get the elders of Bethulia to have sex with her and, when this fails, even asks her servant to go out into the streets, find a man, and lure him to her by saying that she is only 9 years old. When this does not work, because the men of Bethulia are dying of hunger and thirst and so too weak to do what she requires, she dresses as a boy and sets off for the Assyrian camp in search of a man. She first tries to get a captain, unsuccessfully, to sleep with her, and when she is finally brought to Holofernes she actually desires Nebuchadnezar (whom Kaiser inserts into the play), but kills Holofernes, again almost offhandedly, before she can lose her virginity. The Assyrians run away, so her deed does not give the Bethilians the chance to become heroes either. After she has brought Holofernes’s head back to Bethulia, the elders have to check that she has not sinned either through her cross-dressing or by having sex with Holofernes. They are convinced that only after sex could she have managed to get close enough to him to kill him, but then find, after a physical examination, that God has apparently restored her virginity—and declare it a miracle. Their plan for her future is that she must now live apart and honoured for the rest of her life. But she is again physically dragged protesting into the temple, to be coupled this time with Jojakim, the high priest, who deflowers her in the Holy of Holies. Kaiser’s Judith is a witless child who has no heroic dimension whatsoever, is concerned only to fulfil her own sexual desires, and is frequently used by others. As Carol Diethe comments, ‘Kaiser thus enforces the fundamentally misogynist strand in the society of his day while seeming to spoof that same society in his plays’, and she regards this play as ‘an example of extended mockery on the topic of female sexuality’.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Carole Diethe, ‘A New Look at Kaiser’s Women’, in Frank Krause (ed.), *Georg Kaiser and Modernity* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2005), 29–47.

Kaiser's Judith is a puppet, but it is not God who is pulling the strings but the Israelites, with their barbaric social practices which use a woman like a chattel or bargaining-counter.

## The murder question

Sex may or may not have taken place, but a killing definitely has. Judith kills her defenceless enemy in his sleep, at close quarters and in cold blood. What is it that makes the doer of this deed a warrior rather than a murderer? The first answer, as we saw already, is that she is acting as an instrument, in this case God's. Like other human instruments of the divine will, such as Jael or David, pitted in each case against a much more powerful adversary, she can only kill her enemy when he is off guard. In the Book of Judges (*Judg. 4–5*), Jael, after all, first gives Sisera refuge when he is on the run, serves him some milk as refreshment, tucks him up to sleep as a mother would, and then drives a tent-peg into the sleeping man's temple. This is an arguably even more questionable deed than Judith's, for it infringes the laws of hospitality. But, so the argument runs in a godly age, if God is pulling the strings how can such a deed be reprehensible? The second answer is that Judith is not acting as an individual, but as a warrior mandated by the Bethilians. She tells the elders of her plan and asks them to bring the people to the city gate at night to see her go and to pray for her success. She thus makes sure that her foray into enemy territory is sanctioned by her fellow citizens, and that they understand that she is acting on their behalf. This role as official killer makes her a warrior rather than a murderer. The fact that Judith does not die at the end of the story but lives on in honour to a ripe old age also shows that neither God nor society think that her deed needs to be expiated. And, to remove any final doubt, her deed was a one-off occurrence, and she retires safely back within the limits of a woman's existence for the rest of her long life.

When a secular world-view begins to gain ground towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, and at the same time women's sphere of action is more firmly restricted to the home, it becomes much more difficult either to believe in Judith's divine mission or to see her as someone mandated by her nation or community to kill for the common good. If she is neither acting on behalf of her community nor as God's instrument, she simply becomes a murderer.

For the anonymous writer of a play called *Judith und Holofernes*, published in Zerbst in 1818,<sup>70</sup> this makes her Satan's tool. This work is extremely anti-Semitic, something the author denies in his preface by saying that of course he is not criticizing the Jews, for they have given up their evil Jewish (what he calls 'böse talmudische') principles in favour of 'unsere weit bessere christliche' ('our far better Christian ones').<sup>71</sup> This makes them a noble people. The Jews are marked out in the play audibly because, with the exception of Judith herself, they speak a kind of mangled Yiddish German. They are wild, barbaric, and dirty, think themselves too good for physical work, would rather die of thirst than dig a new well, and are referred to again and again in the text as mice and rats ('Mäuse' and 'Ratzen'). In the same way, Bethulia is described over and over again as a nest of mice or rats. Achior, the Assyrian general sympathetic to the Jews, turns out to be Satan in disguise. The Assyrians are much more civilized, as signalized by their educated High German speech. Judith is anything but heroic, keeping water for her own use when the townspeople are dying of thirst. She does not get the idea to save the city herself. Instead, the devil Uriel (that is, Achior) appears to Judith in a dream, telling her to seduce Holofernes and then to cut his head off with a sword. She is therefore Satan's puppet, rather than God's. When she has done the deed and is back in Bethulia, she falls in love with Achior, they marry, and only then does he reveal himself to be the devil, before dragging her off down to Hell. In this play Judith is the very inversion of the good. The work is remarkable for something else too: Judith is a virgin, for her husband Manasses was impotent. This is the first incidence of this idea, so essential for the later treatments of the story by Heine, Hebbel, and Kaiser, treatments that involve rape and defloration followed by castration and/or murder.

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, on the other hand, does present Judith as a warrior in his story *Judith von Bialopol. 1675* ('Judith of Bialopol: 1675', 1874).<sup>72</sup> The Polish city of Bialopol, which has a Jewish minority, is besieged by the Turks led by their pasha. Before going out of the city to eliminate the pasha, the beautiful Jewess Judith has already been fighting alongside the men like a real warrior. She engages in hand-to-hand combat

<sup>70</sup> Anon., *Judith und Holofernes. Ein Drama in fünf Akten* (1818), Kommentierte Ausgabe, ed. Gabrijela Mecky Zaragoza (Munich: Iudicium, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>72</sup> Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Judith von Bialopol. 1675* (1874), in Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 107–20.

with the Turks on the battlements of the besieged city and kills some of them, smashing the heads of the infidels with stones and driving a halberd into one of them. Unlike most works by nineteenth-century male writers, Sacher-Masoch depicts Judith as a self-possessed subject, who takes her own decisions, rejects male direction, and refuses to be pushed into a submissive, passive, female role. Earlier she had said of herself: 'Ich bin nicht das Weib, das sich verkriecht, während die Männer ihre Brust dem Feinde darbieten. Ich teile mit Euch Kampf und Sieg, oder Niederlage und Tod' ('I am not the woman to go and hide when the men are offering their breasts to the enemy. I will share combat and victory or defeat and death with you').<sup>73</sup> Inspired by the Book of Judith, she decides to free her city by first seducing and then killing the enemy commander, and does not consider that she needs her husband's permission to do so (in this version Judith is neither a widow nor a virgin, but a married woman). When her husband refuses to let her go, she gets the starost of Bialopol to imprison him, then sets off with only her Turkish slave in attendance. She easily gains a hold over the Turk by arousing his desire but denying him consummation, but she also refuses to be cowed by him. She kills the pasha, but the man she symbolically castrates is her own husband, not the enemy. He also turned up in the Turkish camp, filled with jealousy, and had tried to do the deed himself. Judith saves his life, but at the same time humiliates him by suggesting that the worst punishment the pasha can mete out is to let him live to see her dallying with the enemy. So this Judith is a domina who enslaves men and makes them suffer before killing one of them. (Sacher-Masoch was fascinated by this aspect of Judith, and his famous novella *Venus im Pelz* ('Venus in Furs', 1870), in which the protagonist dreams of being humiliated, enslaved, and tortured by a beautiful widow, of being Samson to her Delilah but also Holofernes to her Judith, begins with an epigraph from the Book of Judith.<sup>74</sup>) Sacher-Masoch certainly eroticizes the figure of Judith of Bialopol. Nonetheless, her independence and sense of self are refreshing. She does not need either her husband, God, or the devil to tell her what to do. She is no one's instrument and is not acting out of motives of revenge. She is a real warrior and a real subject, one of the very few Judiths by either male or female writers of whom this can be said.

<sup>73</sup> Von Sacher-Masoch, *Judith von Bialopol*, 110.

<sup>74</sup> See the extensive discussion of the Judith motif in Sacher-Masoch's works in Kobelt-Groch's monograph, *Judith macht Geschichte*, 125–96.

## The question of terrorism: Judith and Charlotte Corday

When we move into the contemporary period, the question posed by the Judith story shifts. There is no doubt in the modern mind that Judith has had sex with Holofernes before the killing, so this question simply vanishes. The question of gender roles is still of interest, but it is the question about whether Judith's deed is murder or an act of war that takes on a new urgency in the age of modern terrorism. This is addressed in Rolf Hochhuth's *Judith*.<sup>75</sup> The play was first performed in English translation at the Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow, in 1984, and in German at the Städtische Bühnen, Kiel, in 1985. Critics at both the Scottish and the German premières were obsessed with the erotic incidents in the story, but, though present, they are indeed, as Hochhuth himself said in an interview, of secondary importance.<sup>76</sup> The play reflects on the terrorist acts perpetrated in Germany during World War II, and during the previous decade by the 'Red Army Faction' (Rote Armee Fraktion or RAF), a terrorist group which included several high-profile women, and sets them within the context of the Vietnam War and the Cold War.

Hochhuth's play takes place in two different locations and periods, and has two Judiths. It opens with a prologue set in Minsk in 1943, which stages the (historical) assassination of Wilhelm Kube (1887–1943), Generalkomissar of Weiß-Ruthenien, by the young, attractive Russian widow Jelena Masanik, who herself survived the assassination. In the play, as in history, Jelena is both Kube's servant and his mistress, and she kills Kube, the symbol of the Third Reich and its atrocities, by placing a mine in his bed. Hochhuth has her smuggle the mine into Kube's quarters under her skirt, strapped to her naked pubes. The moment when she lifts her skirt full-frontally towards the audience to remove the mine is described like this:

Der Augenblick, wo über den eindrucksvollen schweren, nackten Oberschenkeln und dem hohen Venusberg die Waffe sichtbar wird, die einen Tyrannen vernichten soll: ist die Sekunde der Erkenntnis in jenem Sinne, den die Bibel meint, wenn Luther immer wieder den Akt übersetzt: 'sie erkannten einander' ... Schon zu Ende

<sup>75</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, *Judith*, in *Alle Dramen*, ii. 2128–329.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Hochhuth in *Penthouse* (Feb. 1985), quoted from Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 136–47, 140.

des 2. Jahrtausends hieß es im babylonischen Epos Gilgamesch: In meinem Schlafgemache wohnet der Tod . . .

The moment in which, over the impressive, heavy, naked thighs and the high mound of Venus, the weapon that will annihilate a tyrant becomes visible is in every sense the moment of truth meant by the Bible, when Luther again and again translates the act as: ‘they knew each other’ . . . Already at the end of the second millennium it says in the Babylonian epic Gilgamesh: ‘Death dwells in my bed chamber’ . . .<sup>77</sup>

So this Judith is a real phallic woman, who wears a mine strapped to her body in place of her missing penis.

The second and more important location is Washington in 1984, in which the second fictional Judith—her first name actually is Judith—is a beautiful, childless, American widow and journalist from the top drawer of Washington society. She kills Ronald Reagan, the US president, with nerve gas to stop the production of chemical weapons which Reagan has just reactivated. The two periods and women meet when the American Judith flies to Minsk to interview the now-elderly Jelena Masanik. While Jelena has some of the heroic quality of the biblical Judith, Hochhuth’s 1980s Judith is an instrument, a puppet. She is masterminded by her brother, a Vietnam veteran so disabled by Agent Orange that he is permanently confined to a wheelchair, and who has his sister gain access to Ronald Reagan by sleeping with a CIA agent. That Hebbel’s *Judith* is an intertext for Hochhuth’s play can be seen by his portrayal of the American Judith. She is supposed to be intelligent and well-educated—she wrote her Ph.D on Racine, we are told—but is portrayed as being susceptible to the attractions of ‘a real man’ in the same way that Hebbel’s Judith was. Hochhuth says of this modern Judith that she is: ‘rasch anfällig für die geistige Auffassung jener Männer, die mehr als Mann als durch Geist sie beeindruckt haben . . . Sie hütet sich überhaupt, zu viel zu denken . . . sie bleibe “lieber eine dunkle Triebtäterin”’ (‘she was quickly susceptible to the intellectual views of those men who impressed her more as men than as intellects . . . She took care in general not to think too much . . . she preferred to remain someone who acted out of dark drives’).<sup>78</sup> She has the blonde mane of a lion, always goes barefoot at home, and is first presented to the audience in a tomato-red jumpsuit with a very long, prominent zip!

<sup>77</sup> Hochhuth, *Judith*, 2159.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 2176–7.

Much of the play is taken up with discussions about what the duty of the citizen is when the state decides to engage in a criminal act; in this case, to restart production of chemical weapons. Participants in these discussions are Judith, her brother Arthur, their Jesuit friend Edward, a professor of chemistry who is Arthur's boss, and Gerald, the CIA agent who is Judith's lover. It is repeatedly pointed out that Germany, as a divided country of which each half-side is locked into the strategic alliances of its respective master, is the country most at risk from Cold War rearmament. When the two Judiths meet, we see the ineffectual nature of Masanik's assassination of Kube, because he was succeeded by a far more tyrannical Nazi commander and 12,000 people were killed in reprisals. Jelena, however, says that the assassination was not murder but the carrying out of a death sentence passed on Kube by the partisans, so her deed does not need justification, any more than a soldier's does. She is further of the opinion that: 'Attentate auf einzelne sind unentbehrlich, um gegen das Unerträgliche zu rebellieren' ('terrorist attacks on individuals are indispensable, as a rebellion against what is unbearable'),<sup>79</sup> and her deed is compared to Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Hitler. When Judith puts the central question to Jelena as to when terrorist attacks are justified, she gets the answer: only when they protect the many against the one and when the terrorist act is the only defence. In Act III Edward, the Jesuit priest, even quotes Luke's Gospel to prove that Jesus justified killing one's enemy. Hochhuth himself said, in the interview in 1985 quoted above, that terrorist acts are justified 'um ein Zeichen zu setzen' ('to make a point').<sup>80</sup> Edward is of the opinion that if you once murder one person you open the way for the murder of many, but one of Judith's last statements before the deed takes place offstage before the last act is that God wants her to do this deed ('Gott will es').<sup>81</sup>

The last act takes place on the shores of the Potomac river, where Gerald, the CIA agent, and Judith regularly go to swim naked and make love. We learn from the radio that Reagan has collapsed, whereupon Gerald discovers that Judith sprayed him with deadly nerve gas. For him she is a murderer, but her own view is that Reagan, the commander-in-chief of the most threatening army that ever existed, has been killed with the weapon that he proposed to use on many millions of non-combatants. Reagan therefore fell as a warrior—which would, of course, make Judith herself a warrior also.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 2244.

<sup>80</sup> Kobelt-Groch, 'Ich bin Judith', 137.

<sup>81</sup> Hochhuth, *Judith*, 2308.

As the play ends, Hochhuth shows Judith rising to a kind of Schillerian nobility and grandeur of soul, as she waits calmly to be arrested. Judith is no longer the psychopathological case study that she is in Hebbel.<sup>82</sup> It is possible at least to ask oneself if she is a hero, though the play simply raises the question without settling it.

The historical figure of Charlotte Corday and the manner in which contemporaries regarded her provides an instructive comparison with the figure of Judith, as we saw above in Hebbel's comment.<sup>83</sup> Corday, whose full name was Marie Anne Charlotte Corday d'Armont (1768–93), had revolutionary sympathies and, from her home in Caen in Normandy, followed with horror the development of the Terror in France in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The so-called September Massacres, in which thousands of so-called 'counter-revolutionaries' were brutally lynched and murdered by the mob, aroused her particular disgust. Jean Marat was principally responsible for urging on the mob, calling for ever greater numbers of opponents to be killed. Corday took an independent decision to go to Paris alone and kill Marat in order, as she hoped, to end this bloodbath. In July 1793 she gained access to Marat on a pretext and stabbed him to death with a kitchen knife that she had bought the day before. Marat, who suffered from a painful skin condition, was sitting in his bath, so that he was not only defenceless but naked when she killed him. At her trial Corday stated very clearly that she was acting alone, that she was not a counter-revolutionary but, on the contrary, supported the revolution, and that she did not act out of some crazed impulse, but had taken a rational decision to liberate France from Marat. She went calmly to her death at the guillotine.

The parallels with Judith are clear: a beautiful young woman, acting alone, using a knife, kills a defenceless man, who is in an intimate setting and therefore off his guard. The man is a villain, so the woman considers it necessary to kill him to save her people. However, there are three important

<sup>82</sup> Kuschel, 'Mord im Namen Gottes?', makes this point on p. 122.

<sup>83</sup> Good accounts of Charlotte Corday in German literature in general are given in: Inge Stephan, 'Gewalt, Eros und Tod. Metamorphosen der Charlotte Corday-Figur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart', in Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Die Marseillaise der Weiber. Frauen, die Französische Revolution und ihre Rezeption* (Hamburg: Argument, 1989), 128–53; id., '"Die erhabne Männin Corday", Christine Westphalens Drama *Charlotte Corday* (1804) und der Corday-Kult am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts', in Inge Stephan, *Inszonierte Weiblichkeit. Codierung der Geschlechter in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 135–62; Helga Abret, 'Tyrannenmord. Politische Attentate in der Literatur und Erika Mitterers Drama *Charlotte Corday*', *Der literarische Zaunkönig*, 3 (2008), 7–19.

differences between Corday and Judith that make it easier to turn the former into a saint and a martyr. First, there is no hint in Corday's encounter with Marat of an erotic relationship between killer and victim,<sup>84</sup> for she did not use her beauty to seduce him, and only spent long enough in his presence to plunge in the knife. Second, she was a virgin, as attested by the doctors who examined her corpse. Third, she paid for her deed with her death, a public death nobly borne.

Contemporary German sympathizers with the revolution were very interested in the case of Corday. The historian Johann Wilhelm Archenholz (1741–1812) translated Corday's letters and the trial transcript into German already in August 1793, a month after her execution, and published them in his journal *Minerva*. Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) composed a dialogue between Corday and Brutus also in 1793, in which Brutus (the killer of Julius Caesar) debates the ethics of political assassination with her, and in the same year Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) was already calling her 'die erhabne Männin Corday' ('the noble virago Corday'). Among the early German commentators, it was Wieland<sup>85</sup> who made the connection not only between Corday and Judith but between Corday and Jael.

Heinrich Zschokke (1771–1848) and Renatus Christian Karl von Senckenberg (1751–1800) published plays about Charlotte Corday in 1794 and 1797 respectively, but it is in Jeal Paul's text 'Halbgespräch' ('Half-Conversation', 1801) that we see the heights to which Corday veneration could ascend.<sup>86</sup> The 'Halbgespräch' depicts a meeting between the author, a nobleman called Graf von—ß, and a presiding judge. It takes place on 17 July, the anniversary of Corday's execution, and debates the rights and wrongs of her deed. Can it be right, asks the judge, for an individual to be judge and jury and simply decide to execute someone, as she did? She was not acting as an individual, objects the author, but as a warrior defending her people from a public enemy:

<sup>84</sup> The fact that Edvard Munch depicts Corday and Marat naked together several times around 1906, with Marat's corpse lying on a blood-spattered bed, tells us something about Munch's state of mind at the time and his anguish over his own personal relationships but nothing about the actual events of 1793.

<sup>85</sup> Christoph Martin Wieland, 'Ein paar Anmerkungen des Herausgebers über Scharlotte Korday', in his periodical *Teutscher Merkur*. See Stephan, 'Gewalt, Eros und Tod', 132.

<sup>86</sup> Jean Paul, *Über Charlotte Corday. Ein Halbgespräch am 17. Juli*. Zuerst gedruckt im Taschenbuch für 1801. Herausgegeben von Fr. Gentz, J.P. und Joh. Heinr. Voß, in Jean Paul, *Werke*, vol. 6, ed. Norbert Miller (Munich: Hanser, 1959–63), 332–58. Stephan lists seven other nineteenth-century plays about Charlotte Corday in her article 'Gewalt, Eros und Tod', 138.

Corday bekämpfte und durchbohrte nicht als Bürgerin einen Staatsbürger, sondern als Kriegerin in einem Bürgerkriege einen Staatsfeind, folglich nicht als Einzelne einen Einzelnen, sondern als gesundes Partei-Mitglied ein abtrünniges krebshafte Glied.<sup>87</sup>

Corday did not, as a citizen, fight and stab another citizen, but as a warrior in a civil war an enemy of the state; so, therefore, not as one individual another individual, but as a healthy member of the party a renegade cancerous member.

The nobleman has erected a shrine to Corday in his park—an altar between two lime trees, on which rests her picture. The three men go to this shrine at sunset, and when he gazes at the picture the author calls Corday a second Jeanne d'Arc. He then reads out an account of Corday's life, deed, and last days, in which her decision to renounce marriage and love is an important factor in her heroic death. As the nobleman says: 'Nur die Jungfrau . . . stirbt für Welt und Vaterland; die Mutter bloß für Kinder und Mann' ('only the virgin . . . dies for world and fatherland; the mother merely for children and husband').<sup>88</sup> Thus, Corday can become Marat's Nemesis, as Jean Paul calls it, and her calm death, as well as her refusal of religion on the scaffold, enable her to become the 'shining goddess' they now revere. The account then pairs Corday in heroism with Adam Lux, the Republican from Mainz, who also died on the scaffold as a martyr because he publicly defended Corday's deed. When the account is finished the author takes the nobleman's hand, as the latter, sobbing, presses his lips to Corday's picture.

The piece was published in the same year as Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, which presents another female warrior and liberator of her people. Corday, like Johanna, kills a man but in a good cause and, like Johanna, expiates the deed by dying herself. Inge Stephan comments that Corday represented a focus for the disappointed and resigned adherents of the Revolution in Germany.<sup>89</sup> But it is also her virginity and her noble death that enable her to be revered unreservedly.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Jean Paul, *Über Charlotte Corday*, 337.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Stephan, 'Die erhabne Männin Corday', 144.

<sup>90</sup> Two plays by women about Charlotte Corday are discussed in Ch. 8. The first of them, Christine Westphalen's drama of 1804, bears witness to the same adulation that we see in Jean Paul, but with a special focus on Corday as a woman and on gender roles and concepts. The second is Erika Mitterer's prose play of 1931, which, like Hochhuth's *Judith*, uses the historical figure to debate the ethics and the use of political assassination.

# Models for the Men: Heroic Maidens from Schiller to Brecht

The representation of real historical women, so-called 'Heldenmädchen' ('heroic maidens'), who took part in military action in the recent or fairly recent past presents problems of a different kind to the mythological and biblical figures discussed up to now. Such women are vouched for by the historical record and therefore really existed. In order to represent them, however, the same rules must be followed as in the representation of any woman warrior: they must have male authority for their actions; they must transcend, and be seen to transcend, their female nature; they must be virgins; and they must die. Only those 'heroic maidens' who never actually fight and never actually wear trousers can be allowed to live. The distinctive element in the depiction of heroic maidens, however, is that they are held up as models for young Germans in the wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—models for young German *men*, it must be stressed. There is no question of an actual woman soldier being a model for women: she can only be used to spur men into action. If even a woman can die for her country, runs the argument, surely a man can do so. Womanly women who support the war effort in other ways are the only people allowed to function as models for women.

## Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans

One particular historical woman, not a German at all, serves as a lens through which later heroic maidens are viewed. She called herself Jehanne the Maid ('Jehanne la Pucelle', c.1412–31), but she is better-known in English as Joan of Arc. She was born in Domrémy in Lorraine and claimed

that she had heard voices and seen visions of the Archangel Michael, St Catherine, and St Margaret ever since she was 13. When she was 17 these voices told her to set off for the court of the dauphin, who was being wrongfully deprived of his throne by the English and the Burgundians, rally him and his troops, and lead them against the foreign foe, recapturing Orleans as a first move. Jeanne put on men's clothing, accomplished the retaking of Orleans, had the king crowned as Charles VII at Rheims, and wanted him to march on Paris. He delayed, and she was captured by the Burgundians at Compiègne, turned over to the English, tried by the Inquisition, and burned at the stake as a witch in 1431. Since she was about 19 when she was executed, historians deduce the date of her birth to be 1412.<sup>1</sup>

Our knowledge of this woman of the early fifteenth century comes from the records of the original trial and then of the rehabilitation hearings held between 1450 and 1456. Her identity as a woman and her sexuality were in the forefront of her interrogators' minds. The trial documents stress again and again that Jeanne was a chaste virgin and not a camp-follower or loose woman, thus as usual making chastity a precondition for heroism in a woman. She herself was interrogated about her virginity and so were all those who knew her. In addition, she was examined physically on several occasions.<sup>2</sup> Then the question arose as to whether someone who did what she did could really be a woman, so her naked, half-burned body was exhibited to the people to reassure them before it was finally burned to ash and scattered on the waters of the Seine. But, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, Joan was a cross-dresser, that is, someone who wears the clothing of the opposite sex, though without attempting to pass as a member of that sex. She did not just wear male clothing as a convenience while taking part in the war, but clung to it after her arrest in the face of considerable opposition. When she learned she was to die, she recanted, admitted everything her captors wanted, and put on women's clothing. But only two days later she had returned to her male attire and gone back to her previous denials of her guilt, so her male costume was important to her. Since it is well documented, it is something that all later works about Jeanne have had to come to terms with. As regards her military activity,

<sup>1</sup> Marina Warner's *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983; 1st edn. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981) discusses both the historical material and the literary treatments of Joan, but only touches on German material.

<sup>2</sup> See Warner's discussion of Joan's virginity in *ibid.* 36–42.

Jehanne states very clearly that she herself did not fight, still less kill, but that she led and encouraged the troops, acting as a standard-bearer.

This woman is the subject of one of the most interesting and influential plays in German literature, still known today to all educated Germans and frequently taught in German schools. It has such rhetorical skill and dramatic sweep that it changed the depiction of the woman warrior in German forever. It appeared in Berlin in 1801 and is Schiller's verse tragedy, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* ('The Maid of Orleans').<sup>3</sup> It is not the first German play about Jehanne, however. In 1752 Johann Gottfried Bernhold published his verse tragedy in rhyming Alexandrine couplets, *La Pucelle d'Orleans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orleans* ('The Maid of Orleans, or Johanna, the Heroine of Orleans').<sup>4</sup> As his title and preface suggest, he knew Voltaire's comic epic poem, *La Pucelle d'Orléans* (1762),<sup>5</sup> perhaps in the version that appeared in 1751. But where Voltaire's poem mocks Joan's claim to virginity, Bernhold stresses his Johanna's heroic nature, as his subtitle makes plain. He tells us in the preface that he regards any attempts to credit Johanna with visions and voices as superstition and prejudice, and he thinks it nonsense to call her a witch, since the deeds she wrought were obviously God's work. Although Johanna's male dress, banner, and sword give her the appearance of what he calls 'Fanatismus', he does not think this can be true. For him she is a true heroine, but it is possible for her to be the saviour of her people and at the same time show such weaknesses as are peculiar to her sex, for example, 'hochmüthig in ihren Unternehmungen werden, verliebte Gedanken und Absichten haben; suchen sich aus ihrer Gefängenschaft auf alle Art zu retten' ('to become proud in her undertakings, to have amorous thoughts and aims, to try to get out of her imprisonment by all means').<sup>6</sup> Heroes and heroines are only human, he goes on to say, and can accomplish great deeds, yet exhibit weaknesses and sins at the same time. Bernhold may be extending the idea of the flawed hero to both men and women, but what he shows us in his play is a woman whose heroism is flawed because of her womanly nature.

<sup>3</sup> Kalender auf das Jahr 1802. *Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie von Schiller* (Berlin: Unger, 1801).

<sup>4</sup> Johann Gottfried Bernhold, *La Pucelle d'Orleans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orleans* (Nuremberg: Stein & Raspe, 1752).

<sup>5</sup> Voltaire began the poem in 1730, and it appeared in various pirated editions in French and English before he published it himself in 1762.

<sup>6</sup> Bernhold, *La Pucelle*, Preface (no pagination).

Bernhold then does what all writers depicting warrior women do down the centuries: he focuses on her sexuality by inventing a reciprocated love between Joan and Dunois, which leads Joan to reject the advances of Flavi, the governor of Compiègne. The latter is jealous of the favour the king shows her, but at the same time is inflamed with love for her. He therefore betrays her by cutting off her retreat in battle, so that she is taken prisoner by the enemy, who then decide to accuse her of witchcraft. When Dunois tries to rescue her from prison, Bedford plunges his dagger into her. She is still alive when the rescuers enter, but dies in Dunois's arms. Why could she not die on the pyre, as history relates? One might argue that it was because Germany was the land of the witch trials and they were still taking place at the time of writing.<sup>7</sup> The real reason is surely that Bernhold wants to turn a political execution into a love-death, thereby taking Joan's death out of the public sphere and putting into the private one. The horrible radiance which the historical Jehanne's painful and public death casts on her figure has been written out of this play. This Joan dies because she arouses sexual desire in the men around her. Her death is also one of the instances in which a German dramatist alters history so that the heroine can die from a stab-wound—Emanuel Geibel's *Sophonisbe*, discussed in Chapter 1, is another. We can only speculate on what lies behind the desire to see women penetrated and watch them bleed.

Schiller's incomparably greater play also mixes notions of heroism with conceptions of femininity and therefore of sexuality. He wrote his *Jungfrau von Orleans* as a counterblast to Voltaire's *Pucelle*, which he heartily disliked and of which he heartily disapproved. According to Schiller's poem of 1802, 'Das Mädchen von Orleans' ('The Maid of Orleans'), Voltaire drags Joan in the mire and his epic is a godless, heartless production. Schiller tells us that his play, by contrast, comes from the heart—'Dich schuf das Herz'.<sup>8</sup> Schiller, a historian, began work in July 1800 with a great programme of historical reading. He read history books about France and England in the fifteenth century, he studied such documents of the trial as were available to him,

<sup>7</sup> The last time a witch was executed on German soil was in 1755 in Kempten. Another woman was condemned as a witch in the same place in 1775 but the sentence of death was not carried out. The last legal execution of a witch took place in Switzerland in Canton Glarus in 1782. See *Hexenwahn. Ängste der Neuzeit*, exhibition catalogue (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2002), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (Munich: Hanser, 1958), i. 460.

and he read works on witchcraft. It is therefore all the more surprising that, when his publisher Unger asked him to recommend illustrations for the first edition, Schiller did not propose a medievalizing depiction of Joan or a well-known engraving of her such as that from Pierre Le Moyne's *Galerie des femmes fortes* (1647), but rather a head of Minerva drawn from a cameo in Goethe's collection which purportedly depicted the Athene Parthenos of Phidias. As Schiller wrote to Unger: 'Dazu paßt nichts so sehr als eine Minerva' ('Nothing fits [the play] as well as a Minerva') (Fig. 17).<sup>9</sup>

What the reader saw, therefore, on opening the *Kalendor für das Jahr 1802*, in which the play was published, was an antique head in profile, wearing a helmet which covers the back of the neck and is decorated with a horsehair crest and a wreath. The face has heavy, rather immobile features, a Roman nose, and slightly parted lips. The goddess wears dangling earrings and a necklace, and her aegis, Athene's scaly cloak which bore the Gorgon's head on the breast, is clearly visible, though here the Gorgon has become a putto. Before Schiller's contemporaries began to read the text, therefore, they had before them not the image of a human girl from humble circumstances who has greatness thrust upon her, but of a superhuman and awe-inspiring war goddess. The engraving of Athene also conditions us to expect a virgin ('parthenos') who has no mother but a crucial relationship to her father, who is a valiant warrior and leader of men, who is, in Marina Warner's words, 'at the heart of men's business'.<sup>10</sup>

A goddess of war is indeed what we get from Schiller in the first three acts of the play. We first meet Johanna in the prologue, with her father and two sisters. Her father wants to give his three daughters in marriage to the three suitable young men who have presented themselves. But Johanna rejects the hand of her suitor Raimond, thus establishing that chaste virginity is part of her self-understanding at this early stage. The question of the historical Jehanne's sexuality was in the forefront of her interrogators' minds. It was important to them to know that she was a virgin. Both the records of her trial and of the rehabilitation hearings held between 1450 and 1456 stress many times that she was chaste and a virgin. Both she and those who knew her were questioned about her virginity, and she was examined physically

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from *Schiller-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui with the assistance of Grit Dommes (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 177.

<sup>10</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Vintage, 1996; 1st edn. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), 110.



Figure 17. Head of Minerva, frontispiece of *Kalender auf das Jahr 1802. Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie von Schiller* (Berlin: Unger, 1801).

on several occasions.<sup>11</sup> Schiller stresses that chaste virginity is part of his Johanna's self-understanding by having her father and her suitor tell us about it, while she stands silent and motionless at the side of the stage. Raimond, in defending her to her father, comments that he often thinks she is a being from another era. Bertrand, who has just returned from the town, appears with a fine helmet which has come into his possession almost by magic. Johanna's first words are the peremptory command: 'Gebt mir den Helm!' ('Give me the helmet').<sup>12</sup> When her father protests, Raimond says she is a worthy wearer of it:

Wohl ziemt ihr dieser kriegerische Schmuck,  
Denn ihre Brust verschließt ein männlich Herz.  
Denkt nach, wie sie den Tigerwolf bezwang,  
Das grimmig wilde Tier, das unsre Herden  
Verwüstete, den Schrecken aller Hirten.  
Sie ganz allein, die löwenherzige Jungfrau,  
Stritt mit dem Wolf und rang das Lamm ihm ab,  
Das er im blutigen Rachen schon davontrug.  
Welch tapfres Haupt auch dieser Helm bedeckt,  
Er kann kein würdiger zieren!<sup>13</sup>

This warlike adornment suits her well, for her breast contains a manly heart. Remember how she tamed the tiger-wolf, the raging wild beast that was decimating our flocks, the terror of all shepherds. She alone, the lionhearted maiden, fought with the wolf and took the lamb from him with force that he was carrying off in his bloody jaws. No matter what brave head this helmet covers, it cannot adorn one more worthy!

So alongside her virginity she has strength and courage beyond that of most men, never mind women. In Johanna's soliloquy in the last scene of the prologue, before her departure for the French court, she tells us that God's instructions to her are to un-woman herself and, by encasing herself in bronze and steel, to transform herself into a warrior.<sup>14</sup>

Once Johanna embarks on her mission to free France and have the dauphin crowned in Rheims, she is presented as not only resolute and fearless but terrifying. Her speech is again peremptory and commanding,

<sup>11</sup> See the discussions of Joan's virginity by Marina Warner, *ibid.* 36–42, and Valerie Hotchkiss, *Clothes Made the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 49–68.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963), 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 11.      <sup>14</sup> Joan's clothing is discussed in greater detail in Ch. 6.

and her presence dominates the scenes at the French court. This is no shrinking peasant girl. As in the title, all the way through the play the word 'Jungfrau' (literally 'virgin') is used to indicate Johanna. This is given a new twist by the fact that the vision she has before setting off on her mission is not of the Archangel Michael and of St Catherine and St Margaret, as the historical sources relate, but of the Virgin Mary. But it was no gentle mother figure who appeared to her. This Virgin bore a sword and a banner and told her to renounce earthly love as Mary herself did—earthly love in this context clearly meaning sexual love. The term 'Jungfrau' is then used in such a way that it is often unclear if the Virgin Mary or the Virgin of Orleans is meant, for instance, when Johanna tells her troops in Act II, scene 4 to strike terror into the enemy with the battle-cry 'God and the Virgin'.

In the following scene, Act II, scene 5, Talbot calls Johanna the 'goddess of terror' ('die Schreckensgöttin') and, to show that this is not just English propaganda against the enemy, Schiller invents a character on the English side called Montgomery, solely so that Johanna can kill him in cold blood on the battlefield. This, again, runs directly counter to the facts about the historical Joan, who made it very clear at her trial that she never killed anyone.

Act II scene 6 is one of the most terrifying in the play. Montgomery sees Johanna coming towards him across the battlefield and describes her in chilling terms:

Dort erscheint die Schreckliche!  
 Aus Brandes Flammen, düster leuchtend, hebt sie sich,  
 Wie aus der Hölle Rachen ein Gespenst der Nacht  
 Hervor.—Wohin entrinn ich! Schon ergreift sie mich  
 Mit ihren Feueraugen, wirft von fern  
 Der Blicke Schlingen nimmer fehlend nach mir aus.  
 Um meine Füße, fest und fester, wirret sich  
 Das Zauberknäuel, daß sie gefesselt mir die Flucht  
 Versagen!<sup>15</sup>

There the terrible one appears! Out of the flames of the conflagration she appears, shining darkly, like a phantom of the night out of the jaws of Hell. Where shall I escape to! She is already enmeshing me with her eyes of fire, is throwing from afar the inescapable coils of her glances round me. The sorceress's web winds itself ever tighter round my feet, so that, fettered they refuse to flee.

<sup>15</sup> Schiller, *Jungfrau*, 53.

Speaking of herself in the third person, Johanna tells him that he has fallen into the hands of a death-dealing virgin who is less merciful than the crocodile, the tiger, or the lioness defending her cubs. Then, changing to the first person, she says that her binding contract with the spirit world obliges her to put to the sword all living things whom the god of battles sends her. When Montgomery tries to appeal to her womanly nature, she replies:

Nicht mein Geschlecht beschwöre! Nenne mich nicht Weib.  
 Gleichwie die körperlosen Geister, die nicht frein  
 Auf irdsche Weise, schließ ich mich an kein Geschlecht  
 Der Menschen an, und dieser Panzer deckt kein Herz.<sup>16</sup>

Do not appeal to my sex! Do not call me woman. Like the incorporeal spirits who do not woo in an earthly manner, I cannot conjoin myself to any race of humans, and this armour does not conceal a heart.

Montgomery tells her of his beloved and his parents back home, but she is unmoved, and when they eventually fight she slays him without remorse or feeling of any kind, in a scene which is indebted to Achilles's killing of Lykaon in Book 21 of the *Iliad*.<sup>17</sup> Schiller has turned the medieval girl into an implacable goddess of war.

He emphasizes her lack of womanly feeling by juxtaposing her with Agnes Sorel, the dauphin's mistress, who is all feeling. Her support for the war effort consists in sacrificing her jewellery and in her loving subordination to the man she adores. In Act IV Agnes says to Johanna, in a famous speech:

O könntest du ein Weib sein und empfinden!  
 Leg diese Rüstung ab, kein Krieg ist mehr,  
 Bekenne dich zum sanfteren Geschlechte!  
 Mein liebend Herz flieht scheu vor dir zurück,  
 Solange du der strengen Pallas gleichst.<sup>18</sup>

Oh, if you could only be a woman and feel! Put off this armour, the war is over. Admit you are a member of the gentler sex! My loving heart shies away from you, as long as you resemble the implacable Pallas.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>17</sup> As Anett Kollmann points out, Schiller has taken actual turns of phrase from the translation of the *Iliad* by Johann Heinrich Voß (Hamburg 1793), which would have been known to Schiller's audience. Anett Kollmann, *Gepanzerte Empfindsamkeit. Helden in Frauengestalt um 1800* (Winter: Heidelberg, 2004), 118, n. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Schiller, *Jungfrau*, 89.

But by this point Johanna has experienced the extraordinary change to her personality which has made critics consider this a problem play. In the last scene of Act III she has encountered the Englishman Lionel on the field of battle, has disarmed him, and is about to drive her sword into his body as she did with Montgomery, when she looks into his eyes. Suddenly, she is lost. The goddess turns in an instant into a mortal woman, who has only to see this man to love him. She cannot kill him, begs him to kill her, and then realizes she has broken her vow of chastity. Lionel is moved by the evident distress she suddenly feels, but takes her sword and escapes, thus 'unmanning' Johanna, the un-woman. The fourth act shows us a Johanna racked with remorse, lamenting the mission that was imposed on her, and longing for Lionel. It is at this point that Agnes reminds us and her, in the speech quoted above, that she was once like Pallas Athene. Her father appears and denounces her as a witch, and she is so conscious of her dereliction of duty in becoming attracted to Lionel that she does not defend herself. She is banned from the court and has to flee. In the fifth act Johanna is on the run with the faithful Raimund, her suitor from the prologue. Johanna/Athene is now called the 'Witch of Orleans' by the people (V. iii. 3108). It is only after she has been captured by the other warrior woman in the play, Queen Isabeau, the dauphin's heartless mother, that she is able to reject Lionel, burst her chains with God's help, and rush to the aid of her king on the battlefield. Her chastity is intimately connected to her strength as a warrior. She loses this strength when she feels desire for Lionel in Act III, scene 10, so much so that she cannot kill him on the battlefield as she killed Montgomery. She only regains her power as a warrior when, in Act V, scene 9, she overcomes her desire and proves it by rejecting Lionel's courtship:

Du bist  
Der Feind mir, der verhaßte, meines Volks.  
Nichts kann gemein sein zwischen dir und mir.

You are my enemy, the hated enemy of my people. There can be nothing in common between you and me.

This enables her in Act V, scene 11 to burst her chains, join her people on the battlefield, and die a hero.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For a classic account of historical cross-dressing woman soldiers see Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989).

Having turned from warrior goddess to witch, she now turns from witch to saint. Not for this Joan death on a pyre but a heroic death on the battlefield, standing up with her banner in her hand before a sky lit with a rosy glow. In her last speech she has a vision of her own apotheosis, her heavy armour turning into wings, as she soars up to heaven and the choirs of angels. The king, who has just called Johanna an angel, gestures to the bystanders to cover her corpse with their lowered banners, after she has sunk to the earth in a death honourably caused by her wounds. She is therefore not the victim of a malevolent church or of her country's enemies, like the historical Joan: this Joan has died for king and country—like a man. The pagan goddess has become a saint, but she can only do so by displaying the emotions of a mortal woman, which of course entails love for a man, and then renouncing them.<sup>20</sup> By renouncing her womanly nature, but in a different way to her initial un-womaning, Schiller can allow Johanna to die a *man's* death on the battlefield and so become a hero.

But even if Schiller's Johanna consists of a bundle of different behaviours at different parts of the play, it is precisely this that makes her so interesting in the context of depictions of the warrior woman. Schiller first of all shows us a woman whom God has told to un-woman herself in order to become a warrior. By becoming an un-woman she achieves the kind of dominance in male society that a man would have. This means that, when she goes to court, even the highest in the land has to do her bidding. As a warrior this Jehanne does not just bear a banner, she fights and kills. She may be inhuman, but she is brave, selfless, and honourable. When she meets Lionel she becomes a woman (again), and is therefore incapable of being a warrior. One might say that Schiller exemplifies the gender debate which raged at the very time he was writing the play. Important contributions to this debate are Wilhelm von Humboldt's essays, published in Schiller's periodical *Die Horen*, entitled 'Ueber den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur' ('On the Difference Between the Sexes and its Influence on Organic Nature', 1794) and 'Ueber männliche und weibliche Form' ('On Male and Female Form', 1795). Humboldt, like

<sup>20</sup> As Inge Stephan points out, the death of Schiller's Joan has nothing to do with history. She dies because of her own contradictory nature. See Inge Stephan, 'Hexe oder Heilige? Zur Geschichte der Jeanne d'Arc und ihrer literarischen Verarbeitung', in *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 35–66, and '“Da werden Weiber zu Hyänen . . .” Amazonen und Amazonenmythen bei Schiller und Kleist', in Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Feministische Literaturwissenschaft. Dokumentation der Tagung in Hamburg vom Mai 1984* (Berlin: Argument, 1984), 23–42.

Fichte, made it very clear that men were active, women passive, men creative, women receptive. Gail Hart, discussing *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, reminds us usefully that ‘Schiller, though certainly a man of his time, did not see gender as a given, but rather as a collection of codified attributes and behaviours that could be projected onto/into a body—though certain bodies were generally more receptive to certain attributes’.<sup>21</sup> She thus corrects Inge Stephan’s more negative assessment of Schiller’s depiction of gender roles.<sup>22</sup>

If Schiller’s play had stopped at the moment when Johanna turns out not to be a heroic figure after all, because of her feminine susceptibility to male charms, this would be a clear case of him exemplifying the simplistic binary pattern. But Schiller writes two more acts in which Johanna literally goes through the wilderness on her flight from the court, ends up in prison, and then transcends human nature to act as, and then die as, a heroine. The pagan goddess has become the Christian saint, aided by God in her hour of need. Of course Johanna is now dead, like all warrior women except Judith. Of course she has triumphed only by returning obediently to the path God has mapped out for her, that of abjuring men and saving her country. But Schiller’s play, though dealing in extremes, goes further than anyone else dares to, either in his day or in the succeeding century, in making a woman a real warrior and then in conferring the approbation of her society on her in the play. He thereby raises the question he confronts us with in other plays such as *Wilhelm Tell*: what is heroism?

## Women warriors against Napoleon

After its publication in book form, Schiller’s *Jungfrau* began its triumphal progress through the German theatres, with performances in Leipzig, Berlin, Stralsund, Hamburg, Schwerin, Dresden, Breslau, Kassel, Güstrow, and Stuttgart within the first nine months of its appearance, and Schiller was feted as its author.<sup>23</sup> The play continued to be performed in other major centres, its heroic vision of the maid who leads her people to victory against the foreign aggressor an inspiring one, once Napoleon and his generals had

<sup>21</sup> Gail K. Hart, ‘Re-dressing History: Mother Nature, Mother Isabeau, the Virgin Mary, and Schiller’s *Jungfrau*’ *Women in German Yearbook*, 14 (1999), 91–107, at 96.

<sup>22</sup> Stephan, ‘Hexe oder Heilige?’

<sup>23</sup> *Schiller-Handbuch*, 180–6.

resoundingly defeated the Prussian and Saxon armies at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstädt in 1806. In the same year Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire, and sixteen German kings and princes pledged allegiance to him in the Confederation of the Rhine ('der Rheinbund').

The Prussians realized, after this humiliation, that they had to reform their army, and the solution that was eventually adopted in 1813 was the introduction of universal military service.<sup>24</sup> This had far-reaching consequences for the relationship between society and the military, for from now on every Prussian family potentially had someone who had served or was serving in the army, and all men had experience of military life. Military service separated men and women and fixed their gender roles as never before, because it became a kind of school through which all men passed and from which women were excluded.<sup>25</sup> Military service and the rights of the citizen were linked in many minds, so that only those who were eligible for military service, in other words Christian men, were thought eligible for those rights.

At the same time, as Ute Frevert and Karen Hagemann have shown, the national disaster that was the defeat of 1806 unleashed a wide-ranging public debate about gender roles.<sup>26</sup> It was widely felt that men needed to become more manly and more valorous, and the complement to this was that women should become more gentle, more womanly, and more nurturing. If the men's task was to be fighters, women could choose between three possible roles: hero's mother, soldier's bride, or nurse. Waving the soldier off to war, welcoming him home, tending his wounds, burying his corpse, and mourning him were the actions thought suitable for women. Yet in spite of all this, in the so-called Wars of Liberation between 1813 and 1815, at the end of which the Prussians and their allies had routed Napoleon, a number of women did defy prevailing gender norms and became soldiers.

Hagemann has found records of twenty-three women who actually joined up, wore uniform, and fought alongside the men in regular campaigns.<sup>27</sup> Of them, by far the most famous is Eleonore Prochaska

<sup>24</sup> See Ute Frevert, *Die kasernierte Nation: Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland* (Munich: Beck, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 103–20.

<sup>26</sup> Hagemann, Karen, 'Heldenmütter, Kriegerbräute und Amazonen. Entwürfe "patriotischer" Weiblichkeit zur Zeit der Freiheitskriege', in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 174–200.

<sup>27</sup> Hagemann, Karen, 'Männlicher Muth und Deutsche Ehre'. *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn, etc.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 383–93. There is a list of all 23 in n. 145 on p. 384.

(or Prohaska).<sup>28</sup> She came from Potsdam, was the motherless daughter of an invalid soldier, and joined the Lützow Volunteers in April 1813 at the age of 28, taking the name of August Renz. Her military career only lasted for six months, because she was wounded in September of the same year and died on 5 October. She had snatched up the drum that a wounded enemy drummer had let fall, and was drumming to rally her own side and give the signal to attack when she was fatally shot. At this moment she is said to have uttered the words: 'Lieutenant, I am a girl' ('Herr Leutnant, ich bin ein Mädchen'). The fact that two letters written to her brother from the field have come down to us have brought her to life for later generations, but they also bring out the gender-related aspects of her story.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that she herself simply took the decision to go to war, and left for the army without telling her father, still less seeking his permission. 'Ich war im Innern meiner Seele überzeugt' ('I was convinced in the depths of my soul'), she writes to her brother when she has been a soldier for four weeks already.<sup>30</sup> She asks him to tell her father where she is, and to shed as good a light as possible on her actions so that he will not be angry. She describes the male attire she bought for herself, selling all her possessions in order to do so, and relates how she has learned to shoot, that she enjoys it, and that she can hit a target at 150 paces. Alongside such male behaviour, however, she explains, in the second letter to her brother, that she stays close to an old hunchbacked tailor who is the only one in the company besides herself who can sew: '[Ich] nähe und wasche auch fleissig und weil ich mich auf die Küche verstehe, mögen sie mich alle gern' ('I sew and do the washing industriously and, because I know how to cook, they all like me'), she writes.<sup>31</sup> So, even though masquerading as a man, she is most useful to her fellow soldiers because of her womanly skills.

Hagemann suggests that Prochaska's death means that she does not threaten gender norms in any lasting way, and so it is possible to link her

<sup>28</sup> Prochaska is the spelling used throughout, except in quotations and titles that use the form Prohaska.

<sup>29</sup> For a biography of Prochaska see [www.epochenapoleon.net/p/prochaska.html](http://www.epochenapoleon.net/p/prochaska.html) (accessed 14 July 2009). This website no longer includes her letters. They became known through Friedrich Förster, *Geschichte der Befreiungskriege 1813–15* (Berlin: Hempel, 1855), i. 28, 859. I have been unable to establish where the original letters are kept and whether they are authentic.

<sup>30</sup> [www.epochenapoleon.de/pages/quellen/prochaska/prochaska/001.htm](http://www.epochenapoleon.de/pages/quellen/prochaska/prochaska/001.htm). Accessed 13 July 2006.

<sup>31</sup> [www.epochenapoleon.de/pages/quellen/rprochaska/prochaskabrief2.htm](http://www.epochenapoleon.de/pages/quellen/rprochaska/prochaskabrief2.htm). Accessed 26 Jan. 2005.

to the myth of Schiller's Maid of Orleans.<sup>32</sup> I see it the other way around. Because the picture of Johanna was fresh in people's minds, the real historical Eleonore Prochaska becomes subsumed into the myth, is thus raised onto a higher plane, and made safe in that way. Prochaska in many ways is the antithesis of Johanna: she actually masquerades as a man, she learns to shoot, she acts of her own volition rather than at God's command. But what is stressed in accounts of her life is her motherlessness, her independence from her father, her male attire, her rallying of the troops, and her death caused by wounds sustained on the battlefield. By emphasizing these aspects, Prochaska could be compared to Schiller's Johanna very soon after her death and, like Johanna, could be dehumanized by being turned into a literary figure.

The first work about her appears to be Friedrich Duncker's play of 1815, *Leonore Prohaska*, only known today because Beethoven wrote incidental music for it. From the three texts that have survived with Beethoven's score, it appears to have been full of patriotic and sentimental rhetoric.<sup>33</sup> The work that kept Prochaska before the public consciousness is Friedrich Rückert's (1788–1866) six-stanza poem entitled 'Auf das Mädchen aus Potsdam, Prochaska' ('To Prochaska, the Girl from Potsdam'), published in 1816.<sup>34</sup> Rückert, unlike Duncker, eschews pathos and uses a jokey balladesque tone, the speaking voice being that of a comrade. The first stanza reads:

Ich müßte mich schämen, ein Mann zu heißen,  
Wenn ich nicht könnte führen das Eisen,  
Und wollte Weibern es gönnen,  
Daß sie führen es können!<sup>35</sup>

I'd blush to call myself a man if I couldn't wield the steel but was happy to allow women to wield it.

<sup>32</sup> Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth', 365.

<sup>33</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven, 'Musik zu Johann Freidrich Leopold Dunckers Drama 'Leonore Prohaska'', W.O. 96, in Helmut Hell (ed.), *Musik zu Egnont und andere Schauspielmusiken* (Munich: G. Henle, 1998). An earlier version of some of these ideas is to be found in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Representations of the Heroic Maiden Eleonore Prochaska in Nineteenth-Century German Literature', in Nigel Harris and Joanne Sayner (eds.), *The Text and its Context: Studies in Modern German Literature and Society Presented to Ronald Speirs on the Occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (Oxford, Bern, and Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007), 315–26.

<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Rückert, 'Kriegerische Spott- und Ehrenlieder' (1816), in *Poetische Werke in zwölf Bänden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Sauerländer, 1882), i. 210.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

The speaker, talking of August Renz (Eleonore), wonders how he and his comrades did not notice that the beardless lad was a woman, then tells how she had to admit her identity when mortally wounded. Addressing the dead Eleonore, the speaker says:

Zum Glück traf dich die Kugel nicht eh'r,  
Als bis du dir hattest gnügliche Ehr'  
Erstritten in Mannesgeberden,  
Jetzt kannst du ein Weib wieder werden.

But the ball did not hit you until you had garnered sufficient honour in manly deeds. Now you can become a woman again.

Valorous deeds are by definition manly deeds, so the speaker repeats the first stanza again, to hammer home the point that women's bravery shames men if they cannot at least equal it.

Another of the women soldiers from the Wars of Liberation celebrated by Rückert, in a similarly ironic poem dating to 1814/15, is Friederike Krüger.<sup>36</sup> As a 19-year-old she also joined Lützow's troop in April 1813 and took the name of August Lübeck. Her sex was quickly discovered, but she was allowed to stay with the soldiers, rose to be a non-commissioned officer, was decorated with the Iron Cross and the Russian Order of St George, and was only discharged from the army in 1815 after the second campaign. Rückert calls his poem 'Der Unteroffizier Auguste Friederike Krüger' ('The Non-commissioned Officer Auguste Friederike Krüger'), the 'August' of her assumed first name apparently confusing him as to her real one. The poem centres not on her warlike deeds but plays with the gender confusion caused by a woman's body in a soldier's uniform:

Dieser Unteroffizier,  
Mädchen, wie gefällt er dir?  
Seine Farben stehn ihm gut,  
Und sein kriegerischer Hut;  
Und er schaut so mutig drein:  
Mädchen, hast ihn Lust zu frein?  
Mädchen, laß es bleiben.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Rückert, 'Zeitgedichte' (1814/15), in *Poetische Werke in zwölf Bänden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Sauerländer, 1882), i. 61–2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

This non-commissioned officer, girl, how do you like him? He looks good in his uniform and in his military cap and his gaze is so courageous. Would you like to woo him, girl? Don't.

Krüger fought with ‘mit rechter Mannsbegier’ (‘with a real man’s desire’) and has an Iron Cross as a dowry. This raises problems of authority within any marriage, of course. Only a capable captain could woo such a soldier and subordinate him in spite of the cross at his throat, runs the last stanza. Krüger has been reduced from a valiant soldier to a sex object, a joke. The most important thing about her is not her obvious courage and skill as a soldier, but the question of which man will tame her. Krüger did indeed marry after she left the army, and did so in a very public way. Her commanding officer Lieutenant-General Ludwig von Borstell advertised in a Berlin newspaper for contributions to a fund for her dowry, and five days later another patron put a similar advertisement into a different newspaper, so that a large sum of money was raised.

The biological sex of Anna Lühring (1796–1866) from Bremen, who fought with Lützow’s Corps from October 1813 to March 1814 under the name of Eduard Krause, was also discovered and she too was allowed to stay to the end of the campaign. She became a celebrity in Berlin after the war and was presented at court. She also married, but after the death of her husband lived on in poverty until her death at the age of 70. Hagemann also cites Maria Werder, who fought alongside her husband in 1806/7 and again in 1813. In the Wars of Liberation she rose to become a sergeant and only revealed her sex after her husband was killed at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, whereupon she left the army. Werder, along with Krüger and Prochaska, were the only three women included in 1817 in a compendium of brave and noble Prussian men and women who had taken part in the war.<sup>38</sup>

But there was another young woman whose contribution to the war effort in subsequent decades was to receive nearly as much literary attention as that of Eleonore Prochaska, and her contribution stays well within the boundaries of womanly conduct. Her name is Johanna Stegen (1793–1842), and she came from Lüneburg. She did not volunteer, wear men’s clothes, or fight in the army. When the Napoleonic troops clashed with the First Pomeranian Regiment near Lüneburg, their ammunition threatened to

<sup>38</sup> Preußischer Patriotenspiegel enthaltend treffliche Charaktergemälde und schöne Züge von braven Männern und edlen Frauen des preußischen Landes während des letzten Krieges (1817). Quoted from Hagemann, ‘Männlicher Muth’, 389.

run out. Johanna Stegen saw that the French had abandoned a cart full of ammunition. She filled her apron with it and ran to the German front line to supply the fusiliers. She ran back and did the same again, often holding a corner of the apron in her teeth so as to leave her hands free. In this way she kept the German troops constantly supplied, and they won the battle. She fearlessly ignored the hail of bullets through which she had to pass again and again, even when they cut through her clothes. Just as Eleonore Prochaska became known as the Heroic Maiden of Potsdam, so Johanna Stegen was called the Heroic Maiden of Lüneburg. She is the only other woman from the Wars of Liberation, besides the two already mentioned, to whom Rückert devotes a poem. It is simply entitled ‘Johanna Stegen’. Rückert is far less ironic about her deeds than he was about those of Prochaska and Krüger. ‘Aber sieht, es ist ein Engel / Unterwegs mit schnellem Fuß’ (‘But see, here is an angel coming, fleet of foot’), he writes in the fourth stanza.<sup>39</sup> This poem comes immediately before the one to Krüger in the collection and provides a counterpoint to it, and Rückert’s different attitude to the two women is very revealing. Where Krüger’s masquerading as a man and her undoubtedly military valour and prowess have to be ironized and thus cut down to size, Stegen’s brave deed, which consists in serving the male combatants, can be lauded. Where Krüger’s salient piece of clothing was an Iron Cross, an object capable of causing great unease to the men around her, Stegen’s is that most female of garments, an apron, emblematic of womanly service.

## Heroic maidens in German literature up to World War I

It is Prochaska and Stegen who dominate literary portrayals over the next century. Rückert’s poems alone would have served to keep them before the reading public, as collected editions of his works were published in 1834, 1836, 1843, 1846, 1868/9, and 1882. Two plays, one about Stegen by Wilhelm Scheerer and the other about Prochaska by Emil Taubert, demonstrate how these two women were instrumentalized in the name of ever more restrictive and infantilizing gender proscriptions for women.

<sup>39</sup> Rückert, ‘Zeitgedichte’ (1814/15), 59–61.

In 1829 Wilhelm Scheerer published his three-act blank-verse drama about Johanna Stegen, subtitled 'Die Jungfrau von Lüneburg' ('The Maid of Lüneburg'), thus aligning the heroine with Schiller's 'Jungfrau'.<sup>40</sup> At the date of writing, Stegen, who was still alive, was a woman of 36, and Scheerer explains in the preface that she told him her story herself. Her courageous deed is not enacted on the stage but is told to her mother by the protagonist on her return. In Act III we are shown Johanna as a fugitive who has to flee her home, because she is now so famous for her part in defeating the enemy that they want to seek her out and kill her. In the course of these wanderings she comes on the Prussian troops and rushes up to General von Dören, delighted that she is now safe, saying to him: 'Hier bin ich nun, Herr General, zu kämpfen / Mit Gott, für König und für Vaterland' ('Here I am, General, ready to fight with God for King and Fatherland!').<sup>41</sup> The General firmly puts her back in her gender-delimited box:

Nicht sey es so, Du edle, kühne Jungfrau!  
 Was Du getahn, es glänzt in der Geschichte,  
 Die Deinen Namen rühmlich nennen wird.  
 Des Mannes starke Brust soll nur bestehen  
 All' die Gefahren, die der Krieg erzeugt.  
 Denn eigenthümlich ward er ihm verheißen.  
 Doch einer holden Jungfrau zarter Busen,  
 Den sanfteren Gefühlen hingegeben,  
 Ward nicht geschaffen für den blut'gen Kampf.  
 Im häuslich-stillen frommen Kreis der Lieben,  
 Da ist das Feld, worauf die handeln soll.  
 Der Mutter Stütze und das Glück des Gatten,  
 Den sie einst wählt, sind ihre Siegstrophäen.<sup>42</sup>

Thus it shall not be, you noble, fearless maiden! What you did shines in the tale that will make your name famous. Only man's strong breast shall survive all the dangers that war produces. For man of his nature was peculiarly dedicated to war. Yet the tender bosom of a gracious maiden, devoted to softer feelings, was not created for the bloody struggle. The domestic, quiet, pious circle of her loved ones is the sphere in which she shall act. The support of her mother and the happiness of the husband whom she shall choose, these are her trophies of victory.

<sup>40</sup> Wilhelm Scheerer, *Johanna Stegen, oder: Die Jungfrau von Lüneburg. National Schauspiel in 3 Acten* (Berlin: Krause, 1829).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 82.

Johanna then meditates on this last phrase ('her mother's support and husband's happiness') and suddenly realizes her duty. She must go back to her mother and look after her, says the general, for how could she prefer the fame of the rough warrior woman to the tender duty of the child ('den Ruhm der rauhen Kriegerin / Vorzogst der Pflicht der zarten Kindlichkeit')?<sup>43</sup> However, Johanna has one wish which she articulates to the general:

Wenn einst der große kampf  
Beendigt ist, und mit des Friedens Palme  
Rückkehren Sie in's theure Vaterland:  
(*Mit jungfräulicher Schaam.*)  
Dann will ich Hand und Herz an einen Gatten  
Verschenken der im Ihrem Jäger-Corps  
Gefochten für des preuß'schen Namens Ruhm!<sup>44</sup>

When the great struggle is over and when you return to the beloved fatherland with the palm of peace [*with maidenly embarrassment*], then I want to give my hand and heart to a husband who has fought in your regiment for the fame of Prussia's name.

She even says that she has already chosen the man, but if she cannot marry him she will simply pick another, for it is easy to choose among so many brave men. The general heartily approves of these sentiments, saying: 'So recht! So muß die zarte Jungfrau sprechen!' ('That's right! That's how the tender maiden must speak!').<sup>45</sup> The repeated use of the word 'Jungfrau' ('maiden') to refer to Johanna (!) Stegen reminds us of Schiller's 'Maid of Orleans', but in Stegen the mere thought of wanting to fight for King and Fatherland has instantly to be suppressed. This is not how women are to act. They are to give up these independent ideas and actions, become childlike again in their relationship to their mothers, and find a man to whom they will subordinate themselves.

A woman writer, imagining Eleonore Prochaska's deeds and death in 1864, sees her heroine very differently. This writer is Elisabeth Grube, and she depicts Prochaska's deeds in her five-act historical prose drama *Die Lützower* ('Lützow's Volunteers').<sup>46</sup> The year 1864 saw the Second Schleswig War, in which Austria and Prussia fought against Denmark for control of the duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg. The play is equipped

<sup>43</sup> Scheerer, *Johanna Stegen*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>46</sup> Elisabeth Grube (née Diez), *Die Lützower. Ein historisches Schauspiel* (Düsseldorf: In Commission der Schab'schen Buchhandlung (W. Nadeln), 1864).

with an epigraph from *the* poet of the Napoleonic Wars, Theodor Körner (1791–1813): ‘Vergiß die treuen Todten nicht und schmücke / Auch unsre Urne mit dem Eichenkranz’ ('Do not forget the faithful dead, and adorn our urn too with a wreath of oak leaves'). The foreword talks of rising up against foreign domination—a reference both to the Napoleonic period but also to the liberation of a numerous German population in Schleswig-Holstein from Danish hegemony. Grube brings a large number of historical figures onto the stage: Lützow, Blücher, Petersdorf, Jahn, Förster, Friesen, Körner, Ennemoser, as well, of course, as August Renz—the name under which Eleonore Prochaska joined up as a soldier. The play covers a period of a year, from February 1813 to March 1814, and moves around between Breslau, Plauen, Kitzen, Rosenberg near Wöbbelin, the Gehrde forest, where Prochaska died, to France. As the title suggests, the play is about Lützow's regiment of volunteers, so goes beyond the Prochaska episode, but she is nevertheless a central character who appears in Acts I, II, and IV. We first see her in Act I, scene 4, as August Renz, dressed as a man, holding a musket. She appears before Frau von Lützow, who is acting as recruiting officer because her husband has gone off to fight. Renz explains that her father is an injured veteran, and as a soldier's child it is her duty to fight for her country. Frau von Lützow sees through her masquerade very quickly, whereupon Renz justifies it by describing her patriotic Prussian upbringing, listening to her father's tales of the Great Elector and Frederick the Great, his grief at Prussia's defeat in 1806, and his conviction that it was Napoleon who murdered Queen Luise, the sainted mother of the Prussian nation. Renz continues:

die lebhafteste Empfindung meiner Jugend war Franzosenhaß; zwischen mein Gebet zu Gott, um Erlösung des Vaterlandes, traten Vorsätze der Rache; Thränen vergoß ich darüber, daß ich ein Mädchen war; aber ich fühlte mich stark und gesund und lernte vom Vater im Scherz und Ernst Exerzieren und Schießen; die heldenmühigen Frauen von Spanien und Tyrol standen vor meinen Augen und die Jungfrau von Orleans schwebte wie ein Heiligenbild in meinen Gedanken.<sup>47</sup>

The most vivid emotion of my youth was hatred of the French. Between my prayers to God to save the Fatherland were resolutions to be avenged. I shed tears over the fact that I was a girl but I felt myself strong and healthy and learned drill and shooting from my father, both as a game and for real. The heroic women of Spain and the Tyrol were before my eyes and the Maid of Orleans hovered in my thoughts like the picture of a saint.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 18.

In Act IV we see Renz marching as the men do and refusing food, because he says he wants to ‘aushalten mit den Kameraden’ ('hold out with the comrades').<sup>48</sup> By now, as Renz, Prochaska is the complete soldier prepared to die for the cause, which is depicted on stage at the end of Act IV, before Act V takes Lützow's regiment to France. The play is full of conventional patriotic rhetoric, but what is interesting in our context is that Grube does not portray Prochaska's cross-dressing as transgressive nor her desire to act like one of the men as anything but laudable. Frau von Lützow, who plays the role of the traditional supportive womanly wife, who promises to nurse her husband if he is injured and who sacrifices her jewellery for the war effort, functions as a foil to Prochaska, as does Frau von Lützow's maid. Frau von Lützow does not betray Prochaska by revealing her identity as a woman, so can be said not to disapprove of her action. One exceptional woman is allowed to act like a man and can even be praised for it, though conventional female behaviour must be maintained as the norm. It is, however, notable that Grube, in contrast to the male writers, does not see Prochaska's womanhood as inherently problematic or as preventing her from putting on uniform and dying for her country.

Not so Emil Taubert (1844–95), who, twenty-five years later, takes Eleonore Prochaska as the subject for his blank-verse drama in four acts published in 1889 (Fig. 18).<sup>49</sup> The play comes with a preface from the theatrical agency of A. Entsch in Berlin, which stresses its patriotic nature and recommends it for performance at such important Prussian celebrations as the anniversaries of the Battle of Sedan, the birthdays of the emperor and empress, and commemorations of the deaths of the emperors Wilhelm I and Friedrich III. Taubert's cast of characters includes, besides Eleonore's father and her brother, the invented figure of Franz, with whom Eleonore is in love but who, though a German, is loyal to the French. He pretends to Eleonore that he has changed sides in order to win her love, and then tries to trick her into fighting for the enemy by procuring for her not a Prussian uniform, but a French one. In Act III, when Eleonore has been with the Lützow Volunteers for some time as August Renz, she takes a prisoner on the battlefield who, of course, turns out to be Franz. As his captor she is given the honour of commanding the firing-squad. In order to save his skin, Franz reminds her of their love and pretends again that he has changed sides.

<sup>48</sup> Grube (née Diez), *Die Lützower*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Emil Taubert, *Eleonore Prohaska. Schauspiel in vier Akten* (Berlin: Walther & Apolant, 1889).



Figure 18. Eleonore Prochaska (1785–1813) is mortally wounded in the Battle on the Gehrde. Engraving.

When this does not work, he threatens to betray Eleonore's true identity, which impels her to give the command to shoot, to prevent him from doing so. This wholly invented episode is Taubert's attempt to equip Eleonore with some of the warlike toughness of Schiller's Maid of Orleans, and it is apparent from the language of the play that Taubert has steeped himself in Schiller. He can expect his audience to pick up the Schillerian echoes in the deliberately archaizing style and in the use of such words as 'Anmut' ('grace'), a key term in Schiller's aesthetic theory. Taubert also thinks of Germany not as Mother Germania but as a male hero, like Friedrich Barbarossa who needs to wake from his long sleep and save the nation. This is Eleonore's speech before she cuts off her hair:

Ein schlesisch Mädchen gab der üpp'gen Locken  
 Prachtvolle Zier dem Krieg. Wohlan! So nehmst  
 Auch mir des Weibes anmutvollsten Schmuck,  
 Doch setzt mir auf das Haupt den Helm, gebt mir  
 Ein Schwert und eine Büchse! Wahrlich, wahrlich:  
 Reckt sich nicht Deutschland wie ein Mann empor,  
 Und schüttelt zornig der Entschluß den langen  
 Nervlosen Traum nicht von der schlaffen Wimper,  
 So endet nimmer dieser Knechtschaft Druck.  
 Und wenn dem Weib des Friedens Werk gebührt,  
 Nun wohl: ich hol' ihn dir, mein Vaterland,  
 Und bring ihn, mit der Palme Schmuck umgürtet,  
 Vom blut'gen Schlachtfeld jauchzend Dir zurück!<sup>50</sup>

A girl from Silesia sacrificed the magnificent adornment of her luxuriant locks. So be it! So take from me the most graceful embellishment of woman, yet place upon my head the helmet, give me a sword and a musket! Truly, truly: if Germany does not rear up like a man and if decisiveness does not angrily shake the long, nerveless dream from its limp eyelashes, then the pressure of this slavery will never end. And if the work of peace is suitable for a woman, then I will do it for you, my Fatherland, and bring it to you, wound round with the palm [of victory], joyfully from the bloody battlefield!

This woman may be going to war but she is only doing so because the male hero has not yet awoken and, even though she is going to the battlefield, she is still imagined as doing the work of peace, which is woman's task. Like Schiller's Jungfrau, Eleonore is divinely mandated for her task:

Gott, gieb mir Kraft, erfülle meine Seele  
 Ganz mit der unerhörten Schmach, der bittern  
 Erniedrigung, die knirschend wir erduldet,  
 Daß jede Muskel dieses schwachen Arms  
 Der heil'ge Zorn zu hartem Stahle hämmre!—<sup>51</sup>

God, give me strength, fill my soul completely with the unheard-of shame, the bitter humiliation which we suffered with gnashing teeth, so that holy anger shall hammer every muscle of this weak arm to steel!

Eleonore here comes close to being Schiller's terrifying Fury, but also resembles the war goddess that, by this date, the figure of Germania had become. Eleonore goes on to equate the uniform she is about to put on with a bridal gown in which she is to be married to the fatherland. But Taubert

<sup>50</sup> Taubert, *Eleonore Prohaska*. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

betrays his own reservations about the idea of a woman with the capacity to kill, even in a good cause, when he has Eleonore describe how her hair under her shako, the cylindrical military cap she will wear as part of her uniform, will snake down like Medusa's locks: 'Und unterm Tschako wie Medusenringel / Die Locken auf den Nacken niederzüngeln!'<sup>52</sup>

When Eleonore is dying, Taubert invents a farewell scene between her, her father, and her brother. Here Eleonore portrays herself not as an independent agent but as her father's puppet and representative. She says to him:

Was ich gethan, ist Deine That gewesen,  
Das Kriegsspiel, das Du lehrtest, ward zum Ernst.  
Du nahmst, wenn ich die Büchse froh erhob,  
Den Feind auf's Korn; Du führtest mir das Schwert;  
Du schrittest mit mir, und allüberall  
Ward mir Dein Beispiel meines Pfades Leuchte.  
Und war es eine Schuld, daß ich, die Magd,  
Die Schranken, die Natur dem Weib gezogen,  
Gewaltsam übersprang, so sühnt's mein Tod.<sup>53</sup>

What I did is your deed. The military game that you taught me became earnest. When I raised my musket, you aimed at the enemy; you guided my sword, you walked with me, and everywhere your example illuminated my path and if it was your fault that I, a maid, violently leapt over the barriers which nature has erected for women, then my death expiates it.

The play ends with Eleonore being given the Iron Cross, and her brother, made a man of by her example, going off to volunteer. The warrior woman is resolute and valorous on the one hand, but on the other she becomes her own father's puppet and must expiate her transgression against the gender order with her death.

As the twentieth century begins and the centenaries of the various battles in the Napoleonic Wars approached, the number of portrayals of these women increased, all instrumentalizing them in the name of militarism and nationalism. Ernst Arfken's prose account of the story of Johanna Stegen is fairly straightforward, though he is indebted to Rückert, whose poem about Johanna he quotes.<sup>54</sup> Otto Karstädt's compendium of various women who

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Ernst Arfken, *Johanna Stegen, die Helden von Lüneburg: eine historische Erzählung aus Lüneburgs schwerster Zeit, unter Benutzung von Maßmanns, Varnhagens u. Volgers diesbezügl. Aufzeichnungen* (Bitterfeld-Leipzig: F. E. Laumann, [1905]).

served Prussia in her hour of need is a historical work, but the historical information is so hedged about with value-judgements about the women's behaviour and proscriptions about their role that the work resembles a manual on how to be a virtuous Prussian woman.<sup>55</sup> Karstädt's saint is the Prussian Queen Luise (1776–1810), who, so the myth goes, sacrificed herself for her country and, though a great lady, had the common touch. Then he praises those women who, in 1813, donated their jewellery for the war effort, encouraged by the appeal of the Prussian princesses. Then come the volunteer nurses, and finally the 'Schwertjungfrauen' or 'Maidens of the Sword'. These predictably cause him the most difficulty:

Wohl erfüllten die Frauen ihre Aufgabe am besten, indem sie . . . am förderlichsten an dem Gewebe der Weltgeschichte mitwirkten dadurch, daß sie, weil sie rechte Frauen waren, die Männer befähigten, rechte Männer zu sein.<sup>56</sup>

Those women fulfilled their task best who worked the most effectively at the web of world history by helping the men to be real men by themselves being real women.

Nonetheless, Karstädt cites a whole list of women soldiers: Maria Buchholtz, Anna Lühring, Sophie Dorothea Friederike Krüger and Lina Petersen (who were both awarded the Iron Cross), Dore Sawosch from Lithuania, Friederike Werder, Lotte Krüger, and two women called respectively Petschinsky and Reibert. The series culminates, predictably, with 'Eleonore' Prochaska and her heroic death and, equally predictably, Karstädt quotes Rückert's poem about Prochaska.

As 1913 approached, and therefore the centenary of the Battle of Leipzig, the great defeat of Napoleon by the combined German forces in 1813, the heroic maidens of the Wars of Liberation were almost buried under a deluge of publications. In 1912 two plays were published that convey the tone of those years with chilling clarity: hatred of the French; glorification of war; praise of, almost a longing for, death; and nationalistic fervour. The first is Heinrich Ludwig's *Eleonore Prohaska*, a patriotic prose play in five acts,<sup>57</sup> which takes us from the low point of 1806 to the victory of 1813 and is a call to Germans to unite and trounce the French. Eleonore, for instance, is a

<sup>55</sup> Otto Karstädt, *Heldenmädchen und Frauen aus großer Zeit*, Ausgabe: 10. und 11. (Hamburg: Schloßmann, 1911). 'Als Deutschland erwachte', Heft 16.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>57</sup> Heinrich Ludwig, *Eleonore Prohaska. Vaterländisches Volksstück in 5 Bildern* (Hamburg: 'Die Landarbeit', 1912).

bloodthirsty Fury who cries: 'Rache will ich nehmen, sehen will ich das Blut der Feinde' ('I want to take revenge, I want to see the blood of the enemy').<sup>58</sup> At the end of the play the curtain opens to reveal a simple monument on the stage, with the inscription: 'Den für Deutschlands Einigkeit und Freiheit Gefallenen!' ('To those who fell for Germany's unity and freedom').<sup>59</sup> From behind the curtain the 'Zeitgeist' sings a song about unity and freedom, and all join in with the last line: 'Blühe, deutsches Vaterland' ('Flourish, German fatherland').<sup>60</sup>

Rudolf Tramnitz's five-act play *Johanna Stegen*<sup>61</sup> bears no resemblance whatsoever to Stegen's real deeds or persona, but is an opportunity to present the 1813–15 war as 'ein heiliger Krieg... Gottes Odem, der wie ein Sturmwind durch die deutschen Lande geht und aller Herzen, jung und alt, entflammt zu heil'ger, glühender Begeisterung' ('a sacred war... God's breath blowing like a storm wind through the German territories, enflaming all hearts, young and old, to a sacred, burning fervour'), as none other than the figure of the vicar proclaims.<sup>62</sup> One can only surmise that Tramnitz used the title as a selling-point for his play, which is mostly designed to whip up militaristic fervour in the audience. It is a melodrama, set largely in Breslau, far distant from the real Johanna's Lüneburg. Tramnitz's Johanna is one of three children of a vicar, a fearless young woman who carries a pistol which she knows how to use, falls in love with her sister's fiancé, who turns out to be on the side of the French, and shoots her own brother by accident. In expiation of her guilt, she then decides to dress as a man and go off to war. 'In meiner reinen, heißen Liebe zum Vaterlande fänd' ich wohl hehre Sühne meiner Schuld' ('in my pure burning love for the Fatherland I will probably find noble expiation for my guilt'), she tells us in Act IV.<sup>63</sup> She is prepared to deny completely that she is a woman, she says, and indeed tells us that, at the moment when she lifted her hand to swear the military oath, she felt that she was no longer a woman but had become a man in spirit: 'Ich fühlte nicht als Weib mich mehr, ich war im Geist zum Mann geworden.'<sup>64</sup> Naturally she dies at the end of the play, not on the battlefield but shot by a Frenchman in her father's vicarage. The fiancé both she and her sister loved rushes off, called by the fatherland, as the curtain comes down.

The actual anniversary of the battle, 1913, saw the publisher Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst in Berlin bring out two series of cheap popular

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Rudolf Tramnitz, *Johanna Stegen. Trauerspiel in fünf Akten* (Düsseldorf: Schmitz & Olbertz, 1912).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 42.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 50.

pamphlets, each consisting of thirty-two pages with a brightly coloured cover and costing 10 groschen, devoted to the heroes and heroines of the Wars of Liberation. One series is called ‘Unter Fahnen und Standarten’ (‘Under Flags and Banners’), decorated on the cover with Iron Crosses, and the other ‘Aus großer Zeit. Von Deutschlands Ehr’ und Wehr’ (‘From a Glorious Age: Of Germany’s Honour and Valour’). No. 32 in the first series and No. 52 in the second is *Eleonore Prohaska* by A. Astory.<sup>65</sup> The cover depicts a dying soldier with a drum next to him, above the caption: ““Ich bin ein Mädchen”, rief Renz, tödlich verwundet zu Boden sinkend” (“I am a girl”, cried Renz, sinking mortally wounded to the ground”). The account begins with six lines from Theodor Körner, the young war poet who himself died in the Wars of Liberation: ‘Das Volk steht auf, der Sturm bricht los’ (‘the people rise up, the storm breaks out’). We then hear about the rush to volunteer on the part of the men and tales of what women can do to help the war effort, such as donate their jewellery and savings. But the (real) call by a lady to found a woman’s regiment, ‘ein Amazonenregiment’, is pooh-poohed:

Dieser jedenfalls einem etwas überreizten Frauengehirn entsprungene Gedanke war nicht zur Ausführung gekommen, denn die deutschen Frauen fanden ihre ersten Aufgaben in der Pflege der Kranken und Verwundeten, im Charpiezupfen und Nähen von Hemden und Hosen für die Landwehr.<sup>66</sup>

The idea, which sprang from a somewhat over-excited female brain, was not realized, for German women discovered their foremost tasks to be the care of the sick and wounded, rolling bandages and sewing shirts and trousers for the militia.

Eleonore joins up and dies, as we know from history. She should serve, the author says, as an example of ‘ein nachahmenswertes Vorbild treuvaterländischen Gesinnung’ (‘an exemplar, worthy of emulation, of a faithful, patriotic ethos’).<sup>67</sup>

No. 41 in the same series is *Zwei deutsche Heldenmädchen* (‘Two German Heroic Maidens’) by A. Nestor, the two maidens in question being Anna Lühring and Johanna Stegen.<sup>68</sup> Here the cover illustration predictably is of

<sup>65</sup> A. Astory, *Eleonore Prohaska* (Berlin: Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst, 1913). ‘Unter Fahnen und Standarten’, No. 32. This was also published in the series ‘Aus großer Zeit. Von Deutschlands Ehr’ und Wehr’ from the same publishers as No. 52.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 6.      <sup>67</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>68</sup> Arnold Nestor, *Zwei deutsche Heldenmädchen* (Berlin: Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst, 1913), ‘Unter Fahnen und Standarten’, No. 41.

Johanna Stegen, holding the tip of her apron in her mouth and handing out ammunition from it with both hands to the waiting soldiers, while clouds of smoke billow out in front of them. The text patronizingly praises Johanna for ‘conquering the inborn weakness of your sex and offering your brow so bravely and courageously to death’ (*die angeborene Schwäche deines Geschlechts besiegend, dem Tod so mutig und tapfer die Stirn geboten*).<sup>69</sup>

The oldest male descendant of Johanna Stegen, Martin Goerlich-Hindersin (Stegen’s married name was Hindersin), decided to jump on this particular bandwagon in 1913 with his verse drama, *Johanna Stegen anno 1813*.<sup>70</sup> He copies whole passages out of Scheerer’s play of 1829 without acknowledgement, and finds his ancestor particularly praiseworthy because her womanliness prevented her from fighting on the battlefield as other women did. He puts the following words into the mouth of the general who is praising her after she has supplied his men with ammunition:

Vom Throne edler Weiblichkeit  
Würd’st Du herniedersteigen,  
Die Dich umgibt mit himmlisch hehrem Glanz!  
Die ausgezeichnet Dich vor andern Heldenmädchen,  
Die da gewappnet und gepanzert,  
Als rauhe Krieger in das Feld gezogen!  
Die Weiblichkeit erhebt Dich über alle die!  
Die Weiblichkeit, der Stolz der deutschen Frau!—  
Und haben wir Deutsche solche Frauen und Töchter,  
Dann werden wir den ganzen Himmel stürmen!—<sup>71</sup>

From the throne of noble womanliness, which surrounds you with a heavenly sublime radiance, you would descend. This womanliness distinguishes you from other heroic maidens who, armed and wearing armour, marched into the field as uncouth warriors! Womanliness exalts you above all of these! Womanliness, the pride of German women! And if we Germans have such wives and daughters, then we will storm the whole of Heaven!

How the author imagines that a soldier of either sex could be wearing armour in 1813 is a puzzle!

At this point it seems as if every other German town wishes to emulate Potsdam with its Prochaska and Lüneburg with its Johanna Stegen. Paul

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Goerlich-Hindersin, *Johanna Stegen anno 1813; Ein deutscher Heidegesang* (Berlin: Gahl 1913).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 62.

Mähler writes up Friederike Krüger as the 'Heroic Maiden of Friedland' in No. 47 of 'Unter Fahnen und Standarten' and No. 79 of 'Aus großer Zeit. Von Deutschlands Ehr' und Wehr', though for once refreshingly without pathos.<sup>72</sup> Fritz Clauß composes a play about a (fictitious) 'Heroic Maiden of Lemberg',<sup>73</sup> a 12- or 13-year-old girl who, on learning that the soldiers at the front are very thirsty, runs away from home with two jugs and dashes to and fro, like Stegen, giving them water. She is wounded, and as she lies in hospital a necklace arrives for her from the emperor with his insignia on it. Peter Werth writes a play about Anna Lühring, the heroic maiden from Bremen.<sup>74</sup> She goes off to fight in order to emulate the deeds of Eleonore Prochaska, but even more to wipe away the shame caused to her family by her sister, who has run off with a French soldier, and to take the place both of her father, who is too old, and of her brother, who is too sick to fight.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see where all this desire for French blood and all this nationalistic fervour led to. The last work devoted to Eleonore Prochaska before World War II only underlines how blinded people were by this same fervour. The work in question is Hermann Stodte's prose tale *Das Preußische Mädchen. Schicksalswege der Eleonore Prochaska* ('The Prussian Maiden: Eleonore Prochaska's Paths of Destiny').<sup>75</sup> It is dedicated by the author to the memory of his son Gerhard, who died in 1917 aged 18 from wounds sustained at Passchendaele. The bereaved father can still write the following:

Glückliches Geschlecht der Männer dann, von dem das Schicksal die lesenswerte Tat, den Einsatz des Lebens selbst verlangt! Als ein Jubel bricht die verhaltene Feiertagsfreude heraus, und wie ein Fest rauscht der Aufbruch durch das ganze Land.

Heiliges Geschlecht der Frauen, die dem Rausch der Männer und Söhne nicht wehren! Deren Augen blank sind vom Stolz auf die Geliebten, wenngleich die Arme und Hände nach dem letzten liebevollen Umfangen wie gelähmt herabsinken.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Paul Mähler, *Das Heldenmädchen von Friedland: Eine Freiheitskämpferin von 1813/15* (Berlin: Verlagshaus für Volksliteratur und Kunst, [1913]), 'Unter Fahnen und Standarten', No. 47, and also in the series 'Aus großer Zeit. Von Deutschlands Ehr' und Wehr', from the same publishers as No. 79.

<sup>73</sup> Fritz Clauß, *Das Heldenmädchen von Lemberg; Ein vaterländisches Spiel für Mädchen nach einer wahren Begebenheit aus dem großen Krieg 1914* (Leipzig: Strauch, [1914]). Jugend- und Volksbühne, No. 245.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Werth (= Julius Cäsar Stülcken), *Die Hanseatin Anna Lühring; Volksstück in 3 Akten* (Hamburg: Glogau 1915).

<sup>75</sup> Hermann Stodte, *Das Preußische Mädchen. Schicksalswege der Eleonore Prochaska* (Berlin: A. W. Hayn's Erben, 1932).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 6.

Happy race of men, from whom fate demands the deed worth reading about, the sacrifice of life itself! The restrained joy of the festival breaks forth as rejoicing, and, like a celebration, the awakening sweeps through the whole country.

Holy race of women, who do not resist the intoxication of their husbands and sons! Whose eyes are bright with pride in their loved ones, even if their arms and hands sink down after the last loving embrace as though paralyzed.

The author then presents his heroine, showing us how she decided to become a soldier. Two women are vital for her inner life as models and guardian angels. One is Schiller's Joan of Arc: 'Schiller! Liebkosend schloß Leonore die Hände um das schmale Bändchen' (Schiller! Caressingly Leonore closed her hands around the slim volume).<sup>77</sup> Even though only a girl, she can achieve more than a man, she thinks, and, as she falls asleep (presumably still clutching Schiller's play), she has a vision of her second role-model. This is a figure which emerges out of a picture on her wall, a figure like a saint. Is this the Mother of God from Domrémy?, she wonders. This face is as serious but much more human, more girlish but with a painful yet motherly and comforting smile. This, of course, is Queen Luise, the Prussian equivalent of the Virgin Mary. Leonore thus has two possible models of womanhood to choose from—the warrior woman and the saintly mother. These two contradictory models exemplify the conflict within the heroine and her increasingly uneasy relationship to the transgressive role she has taken on in becoming a soldier.

At first she seems confident in her actions. When she has been injured and is being nursed somewhere near Leipzig, the woman in whose house she is staying discovers that she is a girl and tells her it is not proper for her to be with the regiment. Leonore's reply is clear:

Schweigt, Frau, das könnte ihr nicht wissen, was Liebe zu Preußen heißt. Euer Vater war wohl nicht Soldat des großen Friedrich. Ihr wißt nicht, was für ein Krieg das ist, ein Krieg um die allerletzte, jämmerliche Schande oder das Herrlichste, die Freiheit; ahnt nicht, daß es ganz gleich ist, ob Mann, ob Weib, wenn nur ein Flintenlauf und ein heißes, heißes Herz mehr dabei ist...<sup>78</sup>

Silence, woman, you cannot know what love of Prussia means. Your father was probably not a soldier of the great Frederick. You do not know what sort of war this is, a war to end either in the basest, most pitiful disgrace or the most

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 69.

magnificent outcome, freedom. It does not dawn on you that it is all one whether one is a man or a woman, if only there is a trigger to pull and a burning, burning heart there . . .

The woman replies:

Die Weiber sollen nicht töten und morden—, das hat der Herr Jesus nimmer geboten. Wunden und Not und Krankheit sollen die Weiber pflegen und heilen. Aber du willst morden . . . Nein, du bist doch kein Weib, wenn du auch langes Haar getragen hast.<sup>79</sup>

Women are not supposed to kill and murder—, our Lord Jesus never allowed that. Women are meant to tend and heal wounds and poverty and sickness. But you want to murder . . . No, you are not a woman, even if you have worn long hair.

It then turns out that when Eleonore is on patrol with some comrades and they encounter a bunch of French soldiers, she is unable to press the trigger and is horrified by the dead bodies she sees. She becomes increasingly melancholy and goes home on leave. Her sister tells her that it is quite unnatural for a woman to be among men, and Eleonore confesses to her father that she is ‘not a real soldier’ because she could not kill. Her father comforts her, however, saying that her inability to kill was only cannon fever and that it will not happen next time. But she becomes more and more depressed, and the cause of this is the conflict between her femininity and her soldiering. The words of the woman in Leipzig ring in her ears and her anguish finds physical expression: she presses her hands to the wall, her limbs twitch with fever, her eyelids hurt without a tear falling, and her heart beats unnaturally fast, until the solution presents itself to her:

Und als der Krampf ausgetobt, da flutete ihr ein Gedanke durch den Sinn: Wenn sie stürbe! Alles wäre dann gut. Gelöst wäre der Zweispalt, in den eine grausame Fügung sie gedrängt. Sterben—das hieße wahr sein, ein Mädchen bleiben, der unerbittlichen Entscheidung entgehen, die sie taumelnd zwischen Eid und Mädchenschwäche niemals finden konnte.<sup>80</sup>

As the seizure took its course, one thought flooded through her mind: if she were to die! Everything would then be all right. The conflict, into which a cruel fate has pushed her, would be resolved. To die—that would mean to be true, to be a girl, to avoid the inexorable decision which she could never reach, lurching between her military oath and her girlish weakness.

<sup>79</sup> Stodte, *Das Preußische Mädchen*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 118–19.

Like Queen Luise, who purportedly died for her people, Eleonore will die too:

Sterben soll ich... So bin auch ich ausgewählt... Sterben soll ich... ich soll Zeugnis sein, wie Gott Schwäche zu Kraft wandelt. Ich soll nicht töten, ich soll Leben werden, in vielen Herzen als ein guter Geist aufstehen. Für andere willig opfern und gar sterben—, nur die Besten tun das.<sup>81</sup>

I am to die... Even I have been chosen... I am to die... I am to be a witness to how God turns weakness into strength. I am not to kill, I am to become life, to arise in many hearts as a good spirit. To sacrifice myself for others willingly and even to die—, only the best do that.

She realizes that, in becoming a soldier, she is a disorderly and transgressive woman and that she cannot be both woman and warrior. She then herself comes up with male writers' traditional solution to the problem of transgressive women—she organizes her own death.

She rejoins her regiment eventually and is still full of fevers and doubts, thinking at night of the dead poet Körner and becoming, in doing so, 'wieder nur ein Mädchen, das ganz und völlig in einem einzigen Gefühl unterging, in dem das Leben und der Tod als ein unbegreiflich Großes und Herrliches mit Körners Zügen vor ihr stand' ('again only a girl who is completely submerged in a single emotion, in which Life and Death stood before her as something incomprehensibly great and magnificent bearing Körner's features').<sup>82</sup> The passage continues with her reflections about death. She is then wounded on the battlefield, has time to take leave of her comrades, and dies. Just as the most important thing about Schiller's Joan is her death, so it is the most important thing about this Eleonore; and just as Schiller's Joan sees a vision of the Virgin Mary as she dies, so Eleonore sees a vision of Queen Luise, the Prussian Mary. This work, written after the carnage of World War I and dedicated to one of the war dead, glorifies death in a manner that hindsight makes unbearable.

## The Austrian Maid of Spinges

But the Prussians were not the only ones to have heroic maidens whom they could instrumentalize in the national cause. In one of Eleonore Prochaska's letters, she mentioned that she was inspired by, among other

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 143.

things, the example of the Tyrolean women who helped fight Napoleon. The most famous of these is Katharina Lanz (1771–1854), the ‘Heroic Maiden of Spinges’, a figure revered to this day in the Tyrol. In the course of Napoleon’s Italian campaign in 1797, his forces attacked the Tyrolean village of Spinges. The villagers withdrew to the walled graveyard round their church to defend themselves and their church, and Katharina not only rallied the villagers but stood on the wall and repelled numerous French soldiers by stabbing them with a hayfork. It was not, however, until 1870 that she became a symbol of Tyrolean resistance against the French.

In 1924 Felix Nabor made Katharina the subject of a story which draws together all the tropes about heroic maidens that we have seen so far.<sup>83</sup> He sets Katharina up as a saint from the outset. She is industrious, modest, and extremely pious. She spends all her spare time in the church, cleaning it, and out of her own savings has paid for an embroidered silk banner for it. She supports old people and can heal the sick. Though an orphan, she turns down all offers of marriage, no matter how advantageous. When she hears that the French are expected, she goes to the church and dedicates herself to God, swearing a solemn oath to remain a virgin for the rest of her life, for the sake of this war and for love of God. She then prays for victory for her country. As she says later, her bridegroom is the Holy Land of Tyrol. Just like the Prussian writers, Nabor give his heroine a model for her actions, and in her case it is Judith in the Old Testament. It so happens that, before the French come, the farmer for whom Katharina works is reading the Bible out loud one Sunday, as he always does, and the chapter that comes up is the story of Judith. Nabor reminds his readers of the salient points in the story, and quotes the high priest who says to Judith: ‘Du bist der Ruhm Jerusalems, die Freude Israels, die Ehre unseres Volkes. Du hast wie ein Held gehandelt und bist starkmütig gewesen, weil du die Keuschheit geliebt hast’ (‘You are the fame of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honour of our race. You acted like a hero and were strong in spirit, because you loved chastity’).<sup>84</sup> Kathi Lanz meditates on this, saying that she too could wield a sword if the defence of her homeland required it, but since this is the business of men,

<sup>83</sup> Felix Nabor (= Karl Allmendinger), *Das Mädchen von Spinges. Geschichtliche Erzählung* (Kaldenkirchen: Missionsdruckerei Steyl, 1924). A patriotic and glorifying portrait of Katharina Lanz is provided by Helene Raff in her novel *Das Mädchen von Spinges. Eine Erzählung aus den Kämpfen Tirols* (Stuttgart: Thienemann, 1927).

<sup>84</sup> Nabor, *Das Mädchen*, 17.

she will not have to. Women's weapons against the enemy are prayer, a courageous spirit, and chastity.

When the women gather stones to take to the churchyard to throw at the enemy when the time comes, Kathi is shown to be a woman of greater than average physical strength. When the fight commences, she rallies the villagers by getting them to sing hymns, then she runs into the church, snatches up the banner she herself commissioned, and rushes over to where the combat is fiercest, waving the banner. When she sees the French coming, she snatches up her huge, three-pronged hayfork and stands in front of the church, protecting it. At this point, Kathi turns into a Fury, a goddess of war, an angel of victory:

Furchtlos hob sie die schreckliche Waffe. Der Augenblick der Not, die Liebe und Sorge um das Heiligtum, das ihren Gott einschloß, machte dieses schwache und demütige Mädchen zur Heldenin, die, von himmlischer Erleuchtung und überirdischer Kraft erfüllt, für Gottes Heiligtum und Gottes Ehre stritt!<sup>85</sup>

Fearlessly she raised the terrible weapon. The hour of need, her love and anxiety for the shrine which contained her God, made this weak and humble maiden into a heroine who, filled with heavenly illumination and supernatural strength, fought for God's shrine and God's honour.

When a French soldier climbs over the wall and runs to the church, he sees the pale girl standing there like an angry archangel, laughs, and cries: 'Ah—une pucelle?',<sup>86</sup> making the point, if it had not occurred to the reader before, of Kathi's likeness to Joan of Arc. As he says this, the Frenchman lowers his bayonet for the deadly blow, but Kathi is quicker. She plunges the hayfork into him, he falls to the ground, never to rise, and two more men do the same. Kathi then rushes to the wall, stands on top of it, and stabs any Frenchman who tried to climb up, her example encouraging the people and bringing about miracles:

Hätte man nicht gewußt, daß sie eine Magd sei, man hätte sie wahrhaftig für ein höheres Wesen halten können, das der Himmel zur Rettung seines getreuen Tirolervolkes auf die Erde gesandt hatte. In ihrem wehenden Haar, das der Wind gelöst hatte, mit ihren blitzenden Augen und geröteten Wangen glich sie an Schönheit und Kraft einem kämpfenden Engel, den der Himmel geadelt hatte!<sup>87</sup>

If one had not known that she was a girl, one would truly have taken her for a higher being, sent by heaven to save its faithful Tyrolean people on earth. In her blowing hair which the wind had loosened, with her flashing eyes and reddened

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 84.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

cheeks, she resembled in beauty and strength a fighting angel, whom Heaven had ennobled.

The French are repulsed and driven down the hill. The Maid of Spinges then becomes famous, but this fame is not to her taste. She leaves the village, walking out of it early one morning, her departure resembling an apotheosis: ‘Dann mit einem Male verschlang eine Wolke das lichte Bild—und sie war für immer verschwunden, die kühne, fromme Maid, die Heldenjungfrau von Spinges!’ (‘For suddenly a cloud hid the bright vision—and she had vanished for ever, the daring, pious maid, the Heroic Maiden of Spinges!')<sup>88</sup> It is as though she has been taken up to heaven in a cloud, as in the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, though history tells us that the real Katharina lived on for another fifty-seven years.

Though her deed is a bloodthirsty one, using a hayfork as a lethal weapon, like the biblical Judith she embodies courage and chastity. Though she turns into an angel of battle and resembles Schiller’s Virgin of Orleans, Nabor’s Austrian Catholic readers will have known that Joan of Arc had been canonized in 1921. The bothersome cross-dresser of Domrémy had been taken up into Heaven. In other ways Katharina Lanz is a far less worrisome heroine than was, for instance, Eleonore Prochaska. Lanz is the epitome of the female stereotype, cooking, cleaning, supporting the old, and healing the sick, and there is never any question of her putting on male attire, still less of attempting to pass as a man. This historical woman can, therefore, with impunity be used to promulgate nationalist and patriotic ideas.

## The end of the Maid of Orleans

Schiller’s portrayal of Joan of Arc and the many sentimental travesties of it did not go unchallenged in the twentieth century. In his prose play *Gilles und Jeanne* (1922) Georg Kaiser takes issue with the tradition by using Joan to focus on another character associated with her. Kaiser picks up on the historical fact that Gilles de Rais, the legendary Bluebeard who killed so many women, encountered Joan or Jeanne at the siege of Orleans.<sup>89</sup> The

<sup>88</sup> Nabor, *Das Mädchen*, 88.

<sup>89</sup> Georg Kaiser, *Gilles und Jeanne*, in *Werke*, ed. Walther Huder, vol. 5: *Stücke 1896–1922* (Frankfurt a. M.: Ullstein, 1972), 743–811. See also Inge Stephan, ‘Hexe oder Heilige?’, 53–4.

first part of the play presents the Joan of Arc story, but with the twist that Gilles is in love with her. She rejects his love, so he refuses to come to her aid on the battlefield, she is arrested, and, out of revenge, Gilles testifies against her at her trial, accusing her of being in league with the devil. Part II deals with Gilles's life after Jeanne's death. He is still driven by a wild desire to possess Jeanne, so his servants constantly procure women for him, take them down into a dungeon in the cellars of his castle, dress them up in full armour, and present them to him as Jeanne. When he discovers that these women are not the real Jeanne he strangles them, taking an increasingly perverse sexual pleasure in the deed. In Part III, when Gilles is eventually brought to trial, Jeanne's ghostly appearance exonerates him, whereupon he confesses his crimes. Good therefore triumphs over evil and Johanna behaves like a true saint, while Gilles is a sinner and a devil. It is, however, in Gilles's psychopathology that Kaiser is principally interested, not in the figure of Joan of Arc.<sup>90</sup>

The long line of works about heroic maidens is finally brought to a close by Bertolt Brecht and his collaborators Elisabeth Hauptmann, Hans Borchardt, and Emil Burri,<sup>91</sup> with the play *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* ('St Joan of the Stockyards', 1929/30). After this, it is hard to see how anyone could write a Joan of Arc play in German again. Jeanne d'Arc becomes Johanna Dark, not a soldier in a conventional army but in the Salvation Army (or rather in what Brecht calls the 'Black Straw Hats') in Chicago in the Depression. Brecht's Johanna is a saint, a truly good person trying to help the poor with soup and religious teachings, willing to sacrifice her own health and ultimately her life for a good cause. However, she has no understanding of the workings of capitalism and her interventions do the very people she is trying to help more harm than good. Her opponent is Mauler, the evil Meat King, the very embodiment of corrupt, exploitative capitalism that keeps the poor poor. At the same time he is a parody of Schiller's dauphin. In a searing economic and political analysis, Brecht shows us religion in the service of whoever will pay, the big bosses using charity as a publicity exercise, and the organization of labour as the only possible way forward. Johanna dies of tuberculosis and starvation at the end, having achieved nothing, and, in a ghastly mockery of Schiller, her corpse is

<sup>90</sup> See Mererid Puw Davies, *The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> Gisela E. Bahr (ed.), *Bertolt Brecht, 'Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe'. Bühnenfassung, Fragmente, Varianten* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971).

reverently covered with lowered banners while a rosy glow lights up the sky and all the other characters chant a quotation from Goethe's *Faust*: 'O Man, two souls dwell in thy breast.' By parodying Schiller and Goethe, Brecht and his team take two of the favourite literary works of the bourgeoisie and use them to castigate that very same class as capitalist exploiters.

The play certainly hit home. Extracts from it with linking passages by Brecht were broadcast in Berlin in 1932, with two famous actors of their day, Carola Neher and Fritz Kortner, in the principal roles. It was then published later in the same year, and the municipal theatre in Darmstadt announced on 25 January 1933, six days before Hitler came to power, that it would première the play that year. This was not to be. A National Socialist regime could not allow what was called 'godless Bolshevik propaganda' to be put on in a public theatre. The transcript of the meeting of the City Council of Darmstadt on 3 February 1933 makes chilling reading.<sup>92</sup> Brecht went into exile in Denmark that summer, and the play was not premièred until 30 April 1959 in Hamburg, twenty-seven years after the Berlin broadcast.

Brecht's Johanna is typical of the heroic maidens who precede her, in that she is the embodiment of womanly compassion and, like most of her predecessors, expiates her transgressions by dying at the end. In addition, Brecht disarms her and portrays her as stupid, like all his other female protagonists. As with the other writers discussed in this chapter, he uses her as a screen onto which ideas which have nothing to do with her are projected, and so his Johanna Dark finally puts a stop to the march of the heroic maiden.

<sup>92</sup> Bahr (ed.), *Bertolt Brecht*, 227–30.

# Un-becoming a Woman: The Woman Warrior as Cross-dresser

As previous chapters have shown, a woman who takes up arms causes great alarm in the male mind. Warriors such as the Amazons and Judith, however, usually remain visible as women. A whole further layer of alarm is caused by a warrior woman whose female body is not visible, who assumes the outward appearance of a man by wearing male clothing, or who even goes so far as to disguise herself as a man. By doing this, a woman not only displaces and threatens men by usurping their defining function as warriors, but she cannot be guarded against, as a woman needs to be guarded against, because her female body is not visible.<sup>1</sup>

Clothing, by both concealing and revealing the wearer's sexual organs, is a semiotic system that marks the wearer's gender and ties sex and gender closely together.<sup>2</sup> The assumption is that the body determines behaviour, so clothing must correspond to the body beneath or the viewer will not know what behaviour to expect or to manifest. A man in a skirt or a woman in trousers destabilizes this semiotic system and must therefore be prohibited. The Old Testament expresses the prohibition in these words: 'A woman shall not wear man's clothing and a man shall not wear women's clothing, for whoever does this is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord'

<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 401–17.

<sup>2</sup> An earlier stage of my thinking about this topic was published as Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'Wearing the Trousers: The Woman Warrior as Cross-dresser in German Literature', in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 28–44.

(Deuteronomy 22: 5).<sup>3</sup> In the one-sex system that prevailed during the Middle Ages and the early modern period, however, a woman might, exceptionally, be allowed to wear male clothing as a sign that she had moved up the scale towards the perfect human, the man.<sup>4</sup> By rising above her female weakness, she could be allowed to wear male clothing. Valerie R. Hotchkiss shows, for instance, how medieval female saints ‘manifested or attained their holiness through cross dressing’.<sup>5</sup> In the Middle Ages, she explains, ‘the consummate Christian is male’, so to dress as a man was a sign of holiness, and was often associated with chastity. Women could even become men by divine agency, as Mary Lindemann reminds us.<sup>6</sup> In the early modern period, warrior women in the Renaissance epic, such as Marfisa and Bradamante in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1516), Clorinda and Gildippe in Tasso’s *Cerusalem liberata* (1581),<sup>7</sup> or Britomart and Radigund in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590), could wear male clothing as the outward sign of their male qualities of courage, fearlessness, and steadfastness, and so could the heroines of the German seventeenth-century courtly novel, as is the case with Valiska, the heroine of Andreas Bucholtz’s novel *Herkules und Valiska* discussed below. These women and others like them were given the admiring soubriquet of ‘virago’, manly woman, or were called *femmes fortes* (‘strong women’)—strong because they were more like men than the average woman. Far from being transgressive figures, these women are exemplars of exceptional manly virtue. At some point, however, the virago either dies a martyr’s death or, having fallen virtuously in love with a noble and heroic male she has fought to protect, is finally tamed by marriage—at which point she puts off her trousers, of course.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version* (London: Catholic Truth Society), 1966. In Luther’s German this reads: ‘Ein Weib soll nicht Mannsgewand tragen, und ein Mann soll nicht Weiberkleider antun; denn wer solches tut, der ist dem HERRN, deinem Gott, ein Greuel.’

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Lindemann, ‘Gender Tales: The Multiple Identities of Maiden Heinrich, Hamburg 1700’, in Ulinka Rublack (ed.), *Gender in Early Modern German History* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 131–51, 144.

<sup>7</sup> This was translated into German in 1626 by Diederich von dem Werder, *Gottfried von Bulljon, Oder Das Erlösete Jerusalem*. See Corinna Herr, ‘Kriegerische Frauen—friedliebende Männer’, in Klaus Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden. Religion—Geschlechter—Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Fink, 2002), 569–83, 579, n. 59.

<sup>8</sup> See Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* (Oxford: OUP, 1977). If a wife seeks to assume the male role in marriage, however, this is castigated in early modern German drama. See David Price, ‘When Women Would Rule: Reversal of Gender Hierarchy in Sixteenth-century German Drama’, *Daphnis*, 20 (1991), 147–66.

The late eighteenth century developed a binary distinction between man and woman, defining each according to essentialist criteria, so that men and women exhibit what the period itself called the ‘*Geschlechtscharaktere*’ (‘gendered natures’), a development discussed above. These essentialist definitions mean that both sex and gender become much more fixed, and that the *virago*, the exceptional ‘almost-man’, is no longer possible.<sup>9</sup> Where in earlier times a woman might, in exceptional circumstances, move up the scale closer to the perfect male and wear male clothing as the expression of it, now, according to the binary model, she cannot, because the boundary between the two sexes is no longer permeable. In this rigid binary system humans must present themselves either as men or as women, and society expects the body beneath the clothing to justify the choice of costume.<sup>10</sup> It is now a more serious and culpable matter for a woman to wear man’s clothing.<sup>11</sup> In her book *Vested Interests*, Marjorie Garber explains that wearing the clothing of the opposite gender throws the very foundations of our social system into confusion: ‘Cross-dressing indicates a *category crisis*, an irresolvable conflict or epistemological crux that destabilizes comfortable binarity.’<sup>12</sup> And ‘the transvestite . . . incarnates and emblematises the disruptive element that intervenes, signaling not just another category crisis, but—much more disquietingly—a crisis of “category” itself’.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Karin Hausen, ‘Die Polarisierung der “Geschlechtscharaktere”. Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben’, in Werner Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1976), 363–93.

<sup>10</sup> In the middle of the nineteenth century, when ‘Sexualwissenschaft’ (the scientific study of sexuality) really began, cross-dressing was the term applied to men wearing women’s clothing, something which was considered to be a sign of homosexuality, what was then called ‘konträre Sexualempfindung’ (‘perverse sexual feelings’), and as such a sign of degeneracy. Half-a-century later Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), one of the pioneers of research into, and calls for the liberal and enlightened treatment of, homosexuality, needed a term for something quite different, the fetishistic wearing of women’s clothing by heterosexual men. He invented the term ‘transvestism’ in 1910 to indicate that kind of sexual behaviour, so it is not a term that is helpful here. See Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb; mit umfangreichem casuistischem und historischem Material* (Berlin: Pulvermacher, 1910). See also Rainer Herrn, *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts. Transvestitismus und Transsexualität in der frühen Sexualwissenschaft* (Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005), and Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> See Elizabeth Krimmer, *In the Company of Men: Cross-dressed Women Around 1800* (Wayne State UP, 2004). This is the book version of her Ph.D thesis for the University of Massachusetts at Amherst: ‘Offizier und Amazona: Frauen in Männerkleidung in der deutschen Literatur um 1800’ (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London: Routledge 1992), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 32.

If wearing male clothing is a transgression, wearing male clothing in order to go to war is a double transgression. In the same decades around 1800 that women were being declared to be physically, temperamentally, intellectually, and morally different from, and inferior to, men, German men—more specifically, Prussian men—were being militarized, as discussed in the previous chapter. In answer to Napoleon's devastating victory over Prussia in 1806, universal military service or 'allgemeine Wehrpflicht' was introduced in February 1813. The citizen—the male citizen—was now defined as someone with a duty to defend the nation. Conversely, only those who defended the nation could be full citizens.<sup>14</sup> Military service now drew men of all ages into the 'Haupt-Bildungsschule der ganzen Nation für den Krieg' ('the chief educational establishment for war for the whole nation'), to quote the phrase that war minister Hermann von Boyen had inserted into the military law of 1814.<sup>15</sup> If, therefore, a woman donned male clothing to join the military, as several women did in the Napoleonic Wars, she was not only setting out to use arms and to kill, she was also claiming for herself the duties, and therefore implicitly the rights, of a full citizen—to which as a woman she was not entitled. Some of these women were discussed in the previous chapter on heroic maidens. As will be shown below, only under certain limited conditions could such a transgression be condoned. It was much more often presented as a crime that had to be expiated and that caused the woman herself and those around her considerable heart-searching.

Where the sexual practices of female cross-dressers are visible to us in the historical record, it is usually because they have committed what was thought of before the Enlightenment as the crime of sodomy, that is, they had sexual relations with a woman while themselves masquerading as men. They are therefore transvestites rather than cross-dressers, and are revealed to us through court records, a particular type of textual evidence that has to be assessed with caution.<sup>16</sup> Both the women themselves and those telling their stories had often absorbed common tropes and, whether consciously

<sup>14</sup> Ute Frevert, 'Das jakobinische Modell. Allgemeine Wehrpflicht und Nationsbildung in Preußen-Deutschland', in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 17–173.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

<sup>16</sup> The pioneering study, based largely on women in the Netherlands, is Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

# Catharina Margaretha Linck.



A.

Als eine Weibes-Person und  
Inspiratische Prophetin.

B.

Als eine verstellte Manns-Person  
und Soldate, unterm Nahmen-  
Anastasius Lagarantinus  
Rosenstengel.

Figure 19. Catharina Margaretha Linck (1687–1721), frontispiece of the pamphlet *Umständliche und wahrhafte Beschreibung einer Land- und Leute-Betrügerin* (n.p.:n.pub., 1720).

Caption: A. As a female and as an unorthodox prophet. B. As a disguised male and soldier, under the name of Anastasius Rosenstengel.

or unconsciously, sometimes made the story conform to traditional models and expectations.<sup>17</sup> One of the best-documented examples is the case of Catharina Margaretha Linck (1687–1721), executed in 1721 for sodomy (Fig. 19).<sup>18</sup> She was born illegitimately some time after 1690 and grew up in the Pietist August Hermann Francke's famous orphanage in Halle. When

<sup>17</sup> Lindemann, 'Gender Tales', discusses this problem at length.

<sup>18</sup> Angela Steidele, *In Männerkleidern. Das verwegene Leben der Catharina Margaretha Linck alias Anastasius Lagrantinus Rosenstengel, hingerichtet 1721* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2004).

she was released from the orphanage she dressed as a man 'for the sake of her chastity', joined a religious sect, and was baptized as Anastasius Lagrantinus Rosenstengl, only the first of a number of colourful aliases she assumed during her life. She travelled around with the sect for two years as a sort of prophet, passing as a man. She then assumed women's clothing briefly in 1705, before becoming a musketeer with the army of Hanover-Lüneburg. She managed to serve undetected from 1705 to 1708, taking part in the War of the Spanish Succession in the Low Countries. She deserted in 1708, was captured and sentenced to death, but revealed her female identity and was released. She joined up again and served with the Prussian troops in 1708–9, assumed female dress briefly in 1709, then joined the 'Polish' troops in Brabant in 1709–10, was taken prisoner by the French, but escaped.<sup>19</sup> She then joined the Hessian troops in 1711, but ran away on being condemned to run the gauntlet. Between 1712 and 1716 she lived both as a man and as a woman alternately, while working in the textile industry. Linck was attracted to women, and wore a leather dildo for purposes of intercourse. She also wore artificial testicles and urinated standing, through a contraption made of horn. In 1717 she married Catharina Margaretha Mühlhahn in Halberstadt, travelling around with her from then until 1720. The couple earned money by begging and by having themselves baptized for money as Catholics and then as Protestants. She was able to achieve vaginal penetration of her 'wife', although the court records report Mühlhahn as saying that this was painful. It is also reported that she placed her dildo into her wife's mouth. It was Mühlhahn's mother who unmasked the supposed husband of her daughter, by tearing off her trousers and revealing her artificial organs, and who handed her over to the authorities. Linck was beheaded with the sword in November 1721 for the crime of sodomy and male impersonation. This was not necessarily the inevitable punishment, as we see from the contrasting recommendations of contemporary legal authorities.<sup>20</sup> Linck might have got away with a beating, if Friedrich Wilhelm I, king of Prussia (1688–1740), had not decided to deal severely with her at the last minute. Mühlhahn was condemned to three years hard labour, followed by banishment.

In contrast to the harsh fate of Catharina Linck, Mary Lindemann cites the comparatively lenient treatment of Agatha Diezschin in the sixteenth century

<sup>19</sup> Steidele, *In Männerkleidem*, says on p.157 that she could not identify this regiment. My suggestion is that these are Saxon troops, since the elector of Saxony (Friedrich August I, 1670–1733) was also the king of Poland at this date (as August II).

<sup>20</sup> These are published by Steidele in *In Männerkleidem*.

and Anna Maria Joseph in the early eighteenth, both of whom lived as men in the city of Freiburg and had intercourse with women.<sup>21</sup> ‘Maiden Heinrich’, on the other hand, or Anna Ilsabe Buncke (?1675–1702), who married a number of women but who was also a murderer and a thief, was executed in Hamburg in 1702. She was actually being punished for the murder she committed, though her sodomy was also mentioned in the official arraignment.

What were the tropes to which the testimony of real women were often made to conform? When a woman in man’s clothes is represented artistically it is usually as a cross-dresser rather than as a transvestite, and in one of two forms: either she is a virago, an exceptional woman, a *femme forte*, or a monstrous and transgressive figure. An example of each of these will be discussed in turn.

### The validated virago

Between 1656 and 1660 the Lutheran clergyman Andreas Heinrich Bucholtz (1607–71) published a novel of some 2,000 pages entitled *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules und der Böhmisichen Königlichen Fräulein Valiska Wunder-Geschichte* (‘The Wondrous Tale of the Christian German Grand Duke Hercules and the Bohemian Royal Princess Valiska’).<sup>22</sup> The novel relates the coming of Christianity in the latter days of the Roman Empire, and the union of Germany and Bohemia, symbolized by the marriage of the eponymous hero and heroine. Bucholtz’s declared purpose is to provide an alternative to the popular *Amadis* romances of the early modern period, works which he considers immoral. Bucholtz meant his story to be morally improving, so he included a great number of exemplary anecdotes, sermons, and even prayers, but he also wished to arouse feelings of national German pride in the reader. He explains in his introduction that he is writing out of ‘Liebe zu meinem Vaterlande’ (‘love of my fatherland’), and that ‘unser Deutschland’ (‘our Germany’),<sup>23</sup> which

<sup>21</sup> Lindemann, ‘Gender Tales’, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Andreas Heinrich Buchholtz, *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules und der Böhmisichen Königlichen Fräulein Valiska Wunder-Geschichte In acht Bücher und zweien Teile abgefasset und allen Gott- und Tugendliebenden Seelen zur Christ- und ehrlichen Ergezligkeit ans Licht gestellet* (Braunschweig: Zilliger, 1659/60). Martin Disselkamp, *Barockhercismus: Konzeptionen ‘politischer’ Größe in Literatur und Traktatistik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), discusses this novel on pp. 83–157.

<sup>23</sup> Buchholtz, *Herkules und Valiska*, 3.

for him includes the Bohemians, Goths, Swedes, Danes, and other northern peoples, has brought forth just as many heroes as the Greeks and Romans. Because of the one-sidedness of previous historiography their deeds are not sufficiently well known, so his novel will redress this balance. Bucholtz wrote *Herkules und Valiska* twenty years before he published it,<sup>24</sup> so the context for such patriotism is the Thirty Years War. Both Herkules and Valiska can be imagined as the heroes that are needed in a time of national struggle.

Bucholtz's immensely complex narrative, with its many sub-plots, tells of how the German prince Herkules, together with his first cousin and boon companion Ladisla, a Bohemian prince, is taken to Rome as a slave; how Herkules becomes a Christian there; and how he is eventually reunited with Valiska, Ladisla's sister, to whom he has been betrothed since childhood. The story is full of dangers, fights against overwhelming odds, journeys, disguises, and chance encounters. The courage and virtue of the characters is constantly tested, but they always rise to the challenge and all the main characters have converted to Christianity by the end of the novel. Martin Disselkamp points out that order is a central concept in the narrative—order in the state, in which religion plays a key role, and order in the individual, who has to learn to discipline his body, his emotions, and his behaviour—and the novel constantly demonstrates the workings of order (and disorder) in practice.<sup>25</sup>

What Disselkamp does not discuss in any detail is the delightful and surprising heroine Valiska, the 'unvergleichliche tapffere und gottfürchtige Valiska' ('the incomparable, courageous, and God-fearing Valiska'),<sup>26</sup> as the author describes her in the preface. She is not a realistically delineated human but an ideal figure, a superhuman being not only possessed of all the most desirable female qualities, but of many male ones too. She first appears towards the end of Book I. We learn that she is stunningly beautiful, but that, even at the age of 14, she was stronger than a servant used to hard physical work. She is graceful, musical, and dances well, but is also learned in Latin and Greek, German and Czech. By the age of 13 she can already read such authors as Livy, Herodotus, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid without recourse to a dictionary. She deliberately rejects female activities, a limited

<sup>24</sup> See Ingeborg Springer-Strand, *Barockroman und Erbauungsliteratur. Studien zum Herkulesroman von Andreas Heinrich Bucholtz* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1975), 1, though she does not make any connections to the political context, only to the literary one.

<sup>25</sup> Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 83–157.

<sup>26</sup> Bucholtz, *Herkules und Valiska*, 2.

education, and a restrictive way of life. She despises sewing, knitting, and lace-making, saying that these are activities for servants who have to earn their living by them (though it turns out later on that, when she attempts such handicrafts, she is excellent at them), choosing to learn the ancient languages instead. She considers that women should spend several hours a day at weapon practice, ‘daß in zeit der Noht sie sich nicht in Kellern verstecketen / sondern dem Vaterlande zu hülfte kämen / und ihre Ehemänner nicht im stiche liessen’ (‘so that they would not hide in cellars in times of need but would come to the aid of their country and not leave their husbands in the lurch’).<sup>27</sup> Valiska loves arms and armour, can ride the most mettlesome horse, has armour specially made for her, can fight on horseback, and also likes hunting. Far from being presented as a transgressive or dangerous character, she is depicted as wholly admirable. Her mother asks her frequently, however:

bildestu dir ein / liebes Kind / durch diese Übungen vielleicht ein Mannesbilde zu werden? Sie aber allemahl zur Antwort gab: sie möchte wünschen / daß solches möglich währe / oder doch zum wenigsten der Brauch seyn möchte, daß das Weibliche Geschlecht den Ritterlichen Übungen nachzöge.<sup>28</sup>

do you delude yourself, dear child, that you can become a man by means of these exercises? But she always replied: she would like to wish that such a thing were possible or that it was at least the custom for the female sex to cultivate knightly exercises.

Bucholtz does not criticize her for this, but merely remarks what a perfectly amiable and virtuous young woman she is. Her manly qualities mean that women are attracted to her too—indeed, when she is in Tyre in Book III she has a hard job to reject the advances of a lady—and she constantly carries out martial and heroic feats that are usually only ascribed to men. As Disselkamp points out, heroic virtue is evidenced by deeds, and Valiska executes heroic deeds even during her childhood; for instance, when she single-handedly kills a raging bull by jumping onto its back and driving a dagger into one of its eyes.<sup>29</sup> Another example is when, at the age of 15, she is kidnapped by brigands and kills a number of them with bow and arrow, and sword, as related in Book II. But the novel describes many such occasions, for Valiska always has arms to hand and uses them whenever necessary, without looking round first for a male protector.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 40.

She enjoys the skilful use of arms for its own sake and takes part in tournaments on several occasions, where, naturally, her skill is so extraordinary that she vanquishes all challengers, the one exception being Herkules. She organizes a tournament at the emperor's court in Book VI, in which she herself competes, disguised as an Amazon. This masquerade is authorized by Herkules, to whom she is now married, and who takes part in the tournament himself. In this tournament Valiska rides, runs at the ring, fights with sword, and bow and arrow, and shows herself not only to be valiant and strong, but perfectly ready to inflict pain and injury on her opponents, smashing out the front teeth of a boastful fencer in single combat, for instance. She does not relinquish her warrior persona and her martial skill either on marriage or even on becoming a mother, so her virginity is not a precondition of her warlike skill, as it is with almost every other woman warrior in this study. Valiska, therefore, is a perfect example of a virago, an exceptional woman who has risen above the limitations of her sex. Her deeds, like those of Herkules, demonstrate that a human being can accomplish superhuman feats if God is on their side.<sup>30</sup>

A sign of her exceptional status is her cross-dressing, which she indulges in at many points at numerous stages of the novel; for instance, when going on a journey, as in Book II. This turns out initially to be a good thing, as she and her party are attacked by brigands and she is taken for a handsome young man and brought to Crete. However, in Book III they want to castrate her there, so she has to reveal her female sex, which leads to the king wanting to marry her. When she is in Ekbatana, again cross-dressed, not only does a woman (Barsene) fall in love with her, but Pharnabazus, the Medean princess's brother, thinks that Valiska closely resembles Herkules. In the twelve-page summary that prefaces his lengthy narrative Bucholtz finds room to mention this episode. This can be interpreted as a nudge to the reader to see Valiska and Herkules as one being. This idea is further confirmed by their names. When dressed as a man, Valiska takes the name of Herkuliskus, a combination of her name and that of Herkules. When he is travelling incognito in search of her, he uses the name Valikules. The eponymous hero and heroine, who differ from all the other characters in

<sup>30</sup> Cornelia Plume, *Heroinen in der Geschlechterordnung. Weiblichkeitsprojektionen bei Daniel Casper von Lohenstein und die Querelle des Femmes* (Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler, 1996), 286–8. Renate Kroll, 'Die Amazone zwischen Wunsch- und Schreckbild', in Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden*, 521–37.

terms of their virtue and heroic qualities, are therefore two aspects of the same person, and together they make up one perfect human being.

The novel plays with the gender ambivalence of the two main characters by having each of them play the part of an Amazon in a tournament on separate occasions. In courtly tournaments, as discussed in the section on Amazons at court in Chapter 2 above, Amazons are warrior women invariably played by men, because under no circumstances could an early modern woman take part in such a contest. In Book III Herkules fights in a tournament in the costume of an Amazon and, without recognizing him, against his own best friend Ladisla. Ladisla constantly feels that to be defeated by a ‘woman’, that is, an Amazon, would be particularly shameful. In Book VI, after she has been married for a considerable time and has given birth to a son, Valiska stages a tournament for the Roman emperor, carrying out an elaborate masquerade in which she competes in the tournament, dressed as an Amazon. In this guise, she carries out the most startling feats of riding—she mounts a mettlesome horse that even the men could not ride—defeats her opponent in a sword-fight in which she wounds him severely, and shows her skill in an archery contest with almost superhuman precision of aim. When appearing as an Amazon she, a woman, is wearing the costume of a woman that a man usually wears, and the deeds she carries out are thought to be manly and far beyond a woman’s physical strength. Herkules is aware of her masquerade and condones, not to say authorizes, it. He himself plays a full part in the deception and in the tournament, but then if Herkules and Valiska are actually one person, Valiska’s behaviour is not transgressive. She can do all that a man can do as a virago, an exceptional woman, but she is also, literally, Herkules’s other half.

If this is the case, the impunity with which she is allowed to engage in male pursuits is no longer a puzzle. It also explains those occasions when she appears, in Cornelia Plume’s analysis, to be acting autonomously without Herkules’s express permission.<sup>31</sup> She does not need his permission if she is part of the whole person that they together constitute. At the end of the novel Valiska stands at her husband’s side, a cross-dresser who has not been punished, a warrior who continues to fight after losing her virginity, a wife whom marriage has not diminished or subordinated. Valiska is, therefore, more than a virago; she is, at least partially, a man.

<sup>31</sup> Plume, *Heroinen in der Geschlechterordnung*, 191.

## The monstrous queen

This positive portrayal is not the norm, however. A woman who cross-dresses and takes up arms is often said to be sexually licentious—an example of what Antonia Fraser calls ‘the Voracity Syndrome’.<sup>32</sup> If this voracity is taken to perverse extremes, the cross-dressed woman may even be depicted as incestuous, as Semiramis is by some authors.<sup>33</sup> The Carthaginian queen Sophonisbe (d. 203 BCE) is another figure in whom courage and ability as a warrior can be coupled with sexual voracity. In 1666 the dramatist and novelist Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635–83) wrote a verse tragedy about the part she played in the Second Punic War. The play was first performed in 1669, though not published until 1680. Historically, Sophonisbe’s father Hasdrubal first betrothed her to the Carthaginian prince Masinissa, and then, for political reasons, married her to the Numidian prince Syphax, who revolted against Rome and was taken prisoner by the Romans. In his absence Sophonisbe takes command of the army, but is captured by Masinissa, an ally of Rome. Masinissa is strongly attracted to her, and she uses this to turn him against the Romans. When Scipio demands that Masinissa hand her over as a rebel, the latter sends her a cup of poison to save her from the humiliation of surrendering to Rome. She drinks the poison and dies.<sup>34</sup>

In Lohenstein’s play Sophonisbe is beautiful and sensual, and prepared to take on a man’s role in the military struggle against the Roman imperial forces. In the first act of the play, when she learns that her husband has been taken prisoner, her first reaction is to hand herself over to the Romans as a substitute, but then she decides to take up arms in his stead. This is the speech Lohenstein gives her:

Legt uns den Harnisch an. Den Helm her! Schneidet mir  
Nun das unnütze Haar zu Seenen auf die Bogen  
Von Stirn und Scheitel ab. Welch Weib uns ist bewogen /  
Welch unerschrocken Weib das Vaterland nicht haßt /

<sup>32</sup> Antonia Fraser, *The Warrior Queens: Boadicea’s Chariot* (London: Mandarin, 1989), 335. Fraser discusses the way in which a voracious sexual appetite is attributed to many warrior queens in the most diverse countries and eras.

<sup>33</sup> Diodorus Siculus’ *Bibliothēke Historikē* (first century BCE) gives a lot of detail about Semiramis’ extraordinary abilities as a ruler, a builder of cities, a general, and a conqueror in chs. 4 to 20 of Book II. Later authors, such as Dante and Boccaccio, turn her into an incestuous mother.

<sup>34</sup> Emanuel Geibel’s play *Sophonisbe* (1868) is discussed in Ch. 1.

Sol nachthun / was ihr seht. Wir wollen des Krieges Last  
 Mit unverzagter Faust nebst euch/ ihr Helden/ tragen;  
 Der Stadt Beschirmer sein / ...  
 Lägt euch / ihr Liebsten / stracks auch Helm und Küras bey.  
 Der Himmel kan verleihn; daß Sophonisbe sey  
 Des Feindes Tomyris / ihr mehr als Amazonen;  
 ... Ihr schafft für dis Altar  
 Stracks unsre Kinder her. Mein eigen Blutt bezeuge  
 Mit was für Liebes-Milch' ich Reich' und Völcker säuge.<sup>35</sup>

Put on our armour! Give me the helmet! Cut my useless hair from my head to make strings for our bows. Any woman who is loyal to us, any fearless woman who does not hate the fatherland shall emulate what you see here. We want to bear the burden of war fearlessly at your side, you heroes, to be protectors of the city . . . My dear ones, put on helmet and cuirass immediately. May Heaven grant that Sophonisbe be a Tomyris to our enemies, you more than Amazons. . . . Bring our children immediately before this altar. My own blood shall bear witness to the milk of love with which I shall suckle my kingdom and my peoples.

Sophonisbe does not just arm herself. She wants to unwoman herself by cutting off all her hair in order to go to war like a man to defend her country. She compares herself to Tomyris, the queen of the Massagetes, who conquered King Cyrus and fulfilled her promise to make him drink blood by plunging his head, cut from his corpse, into a skin full of human blood. Sophonisbe also invokes the Amazons, as a comparison for women who emulate her. Sophonisbe's undoubted courage and decisiveness, it is implied, can lead to bloody and perverse deeds. Having donned male clothing, for instance, it is only a short step before she decides to sacrifice her own children on the altar, like a second Medea, and to feed her people with her children's blood, in a terrible perversion of the mother's role.<sup>36</sup> But this is not all, for we learn in her next speech that, since she is now putting on men's clothes, her stepson Vermina has to dress as a woman:

Die Götter machen wahr dis / was mein Wunsch begehrt!  
 Kommt / gürtet umb den Leib hier meines Königs Schwerdt.  
 Vermina schmücke dich mit unserm Frauen-Kleide /

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, *Sophonisbe / Trauerspiel. Breßlau / Auf Unkosten Jesiaeae Fellgibels / Buchhändlers aldar. 1680*. Quoted from Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, *Sophonisbe*, ed. Rolf Tarot (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), 32–3.

<sup>36</sup> Cornelia Plume sees this as wholly positive: Cornelia Plume, *Heroinen in der Geschlechterordnung. Weiblichkeitprojektionen bei Daniel Casper von Lohenstein und die Quelle des Femmes* (Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler, 1996), 228.

Die Andacht macht: daß sich ein Held mit unser Seide  
 Hier nicht verstellt und fleckt. Zeuch meinen Rock auch an;  
 Daß ich in Helden-Tracht dem Mohnden opfern kan /  
 Und du dis heilge Bild in Weiber-Kleidern ehren;  
 Weil sonst die Göttin nicht pflegt Betende zu hören.<sup>37</sup>

The gods make true what my wish desires! Come, gird me with the sword of my king. Vermina, adorn yourself with our woman's costume. Piety dictates that a hero is not disguised and sullied by our silk. Put on my skirt as well, so that I can sacrifice to the Moon in the costume of a hero and you can honour this sacred image in women's clothing, because the goddess does not otherwise hear those who pray to her.

The cross-dressed woman who goes to war emasculates and symbolically castrates the men around her. Lohenstein gave thought to the whole question of cross-dressing, as his own lengthy footnote to the passage just quoted makes clear. In it he quotes such scholars and antiquaries as Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) and John Selden (1584–1654) to the effect, ‘daß bey den Alten *Venus* und der Mohnde einerley / beyde auch Männ- und Weibliches Geschlechts gewesen sey. Dahero hätten ihr die Männer in weib- die Weiber in männlichen Kleidern opfern müssen’ ('that, for the Ancients, Venus and the Moon were one and the same and that both of them had both the male and the female sex. Therefore men had to sacrifice to them in women's, women in men's clothes').<sup>38</sup> Lohenstein is associating cross-dressing here with religious practices that pre-date the Judaeo-Christian tradition. But then Lohenstein gets to the Old Testament prohibition against cross-dressing, and varies it significantly. He writes in his footnote: ‘Worauf denn das göttliche Verbot *Deuteron.* 22. 5. zielet: Daß die Weiber nicht Waffen / die Männer nicht Weiberkleider tragen sollen’ ('to which<sup>39</sup> the divine prohibition *Deuteron.* 22.5 relates: that women shall not bear arms and men shall not wear women's clothing'). In Luther's translation the Bible says that women are prohibited from wearing 'ein Mannsgewand' ('a man's garment'), not that they are prohibited from bearing arms. Lohenstein is making Sophonisbe's desire to go to war even more transgressive than it already is by claiming that the Old Testament has expressly forbidden women to become warriors. He then goes on to portray Sophonisbe as a kind of witch:

<sup>37</sup> Lohenstein, *Sophonisbe*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 128–9.

<sup>39</sup> The hermaphroditic worship of the pagans is meant.

Errette Kabar uns / du Schutzstern dieser Stadt!  
 Baaltis höre mich / weil man dir allzeit hat  
 Hochedles Menschen-Blutt und Kinder-Fleisch gewehret:  
 Daß es dein glüend Bild verbrennt hat und verzehret.  
 Schau / Göttin / gleich sich dir zwey meiner Kinderstelln.  
 Im Fall ihr schmeltzend Leib sol deine Flamm erhellt /  
 Eröfne deinen Heisch mit den gewohnten Strahlen.  
 Ja / ja! Ich sehe schon die Glutt sich röther mahlen.  
 Die Flamme krönt dein Haupt. Kommt her / ihr Kinder looßt /  
 Wer würdig unter euch sey auf den glimmen Roost  
 Als Opfer für das Heil des Vaterlands zu steigen.<sup>40</sup>

Kabar, you tutelary planet of the city, save us. Baaltis, hear me, because we have always accorded you noble human blood and children's flesh which your blazing image has burned and consumed. Look, Goddess, how two of my children immediately present themselves to you. If their dissolving bodies brighten your flame, tell us your demand with your customary rays of light. Yes, yes, I already see the fire burning redder, the flame crowns your head. Come here, children, cast lots for which of you is worthy of climbing onto the burning rack as a sacrifice for the good of the fatherland.

The children are rescued by Syphax, who has managed to escape from Roman captivity and return in time. He is horrified by what Sophonisbe is about to do, just as he is horrified to find Vermina in women's clothing.

Sophonisbe's beauty casts such a powerful spell over the Romanized Carthaginian Masinissa when he captures her in Act II that this seems to him like sorcery.<sup>41</sup> Wrestling with the overwhelming desire he feels for her, he says in a soliloquy in Act II, scene 3:

Gleicht Sophonisbe sich der zaubernden Medeen?  
 Sol ich der Creuse Brand des Creon Ach ausstehen?  
 Steckt sie durch blossen Blick wie Basilischken an?  
 Werd' ich geäschert ein / eh ich den Zunder kan  
 So grosser Flammen sehn?<sup>42</sup>

Does Sophonisbe resemble the sorceress Medea? Shall I survive Creusa's conflagration, Creon's grief? Does she inflame through her mere gaze like the basilisk?

<sup>40</sup> Lohenstein, *Sophonisbe*, 33–4.

<sup>41</sup> See Sarah Colvin, *The Rhetorical Feminine: Gender and Orient on the German Stage, 1647–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), on the Venusian rhetoric in the play; Karin Kelping, *Frauenbilder im deutschen Barockdrama: zur literarischen Anthropologie der Frau* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2003), and Plume, *Heroinen in der Geschlechterordnung*.

<sup>42</sup> Lohenstein, *Sophonisbe*, 46.

Shall I be turned to ash before I can see the tinder which gives rise to such huge flames?

Masinissa is comparing Sophonisbe here to Medea, who out of jealousy gave Creusa a dress which burned her to death, and to the basilisk whose very gaze can kill. Later in the same monologue he calls her a lethal spider, a snake, a leech, a dragon, an adder, and a witch.<sup>43</sup> The danger this woman represents is only removed at the end of the play when, urged on by his Roman mentor Scipio, Masinissa sends her a cup of poison which she drinks. By accepting this, she rises above her sexuality and expiates her transgression in death. Masinissa can then conquer his irrational lust, put aside the Carthaginian or African side of his nature, and, by espousing reason, return to being a faithful ally of Rome. Sophonisbe's cross-dressing is the first step towards the monstrous sacrifice of her children and a sign that this woman is so unnatural that she is not human at all.

### The indestructible hermaphrodite

One of the liveliest portrayals of a transgressive warrior woman in the whole of German literature is the eponymous heroine of the autobiographical novel set in the Thirty Years War, *Trutz Simplex, Oder Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landstörzerin Courasche* ('A Challenge to Simplicissimus, or the Life History of Courage, the Arch-Trickster and Vagabond', 1670), by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (1621–76).<sup>44</sup> From many points of view she is a unique creation (Fig. 20). Courasche begins life as a gently reared young orphan called Libuschka,<sup>45</sup> who does not know who

<sup>43</sup> Five later German plays about Sophonisbe are: August Gottlieb Meißner, *Sophonisbe: Ein musikalisch Drama, mit historischem Prolog und Chören von A. G. Meißner* (Leipzig: Dykische Buchhandlung, 1776); Gerhard Anton Hermann Gramberg, *Sophonisbe, Tragödie in fünf Akten* (Oldenburg: Schulz'schen Buchhandlung, 1808); Eduard Rüffer, *Sophonisbe* (Gotha: E. F. Thiemann, 1857); Robert Prölß, *Sophonisbe. Trauerspiel in fünf Akten* (Dresden: n.pub., 1862); and Jakob Friedrich Horn, *Sophonisbe* (Kiel: Homann, 1862). Emanuel Geibel's *Sophonisbe. Tragödie in fünf Anzügen von Emanuel Geibel* (Stuttgart: Verlag der J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1868) is discussed in Ch. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Trutz Simplex, Oder Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landsörzerin Courasche*, in Grimmelshausen, *Simplicianische Schriften* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976).

<sup>45</sup> This is the diminutive form of Libussa, the name of the Bohemian princess whose rule has to cede to the patriarchal rule of Primislavus, as discussed in Ch. 3.



Figure 20. Courasche and her companion Springinsfeld, frontispiece of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Trutz Simplex, Oder Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landstörzerin Courasche* (Utopia [i.e. Nürnberg]: Stratot [i.e. Felsecker], [1670]).

her parents are. Finding herself alone and unprotected in a war zone, she cuts her hair and dresses as a boy in order not to be raped, then joins the army, which she immediately loves, teaching herself how to ape male drinking and cursing habits. ‘Courasche’ is the name she gives to her own private parts, after a brawl in the camp in which she shows extraordinary aggression towards her opponent who, thinking she is a man, tries to grab her sexual organs. ‘Courasche’ (literally, ‘courage’) therefore stands both for what she does not have—a penis—as well as what she does have—a vagina. It becomes her nickname, and indicates both her manly courage and her voracious sexual appetite. She is a warrior, and a highly successful one, who loves fighting and is often better at it than the men. Of her first battle she says:

Damals wünschte ich ein Mann zu sein, umb dem Krieg meine Tage nachzuhängen; dann es gieng so lustig her, daß mir das Herz im Leib lachte; und solche Begierde vermehrte mir die Schlacht auf dem Weißen Berg bei Prag.<sup>46</sup>

At that time I wanted to be a man in order to go to war all my days; for it was so enjoyable that my heart rejoiced in my body; and the Battle of the White Mountain outside Prague increased this desire in me.

At the same time she is sexually voracious, getting through seven husbands, a further potential three husbands, and many lovers. She also lives by prostitution at certain points in the book. For a man to become her lover is a death sentence, for the men she is associated with die in extremely quick succession.

Courasche is compared at the end of the novel to a series of death-dealing monsters, possessed of irresistible supernatural powers, in the so-called 'Zugab des Autors' or author's note:

Darum dann nun, ihr züchtige Jüngling, ihr ehrliche Witwer und auch ihr verehlichte Männer, die ihr euch noch bishero vor diesen gefährlichen Chimäris vorgesehen, denen schröklichen Medusen entgangen, die Ohren vor diesen verfluchten Sirenen verstopft und diesen unergründlichen und bodenlosen Belidibus abgesagt oder wenigstens mit der Flucht widerstanden seid, lasset euch auch fürterhin diese Lupas nicht betören.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore now, you virtuous youths, you honourable widowers, and you too, you married men, who have up to now avoided these dangerous chimeras, have escaped from these terrible Medusas, have closed your ears to these accursed Sirens and have turned down these incomprehensible and unfathomable Belides or at least have resisted by taking flight, do not let yourselves be led astray in future by these she-wolves.

Courasche is here being placed in the same category as the fire-spitting chimera, a creature who is part-lion, part-goat, and part-snake, the death-dealing Medusa, the alluring Sirens, the Belides, who killed their own husbands, and the she-wolf, all monsters who destroy men.

Because of the combination of masculine clothing and female body, male aggression and female sensuality, Courasche represents both male and female at once, and even calls herself a hermaphrodite: 'ich gedachte oft mich vor einen Hermaphroditen auszugeben' ('I often thought of passing myself off as a hermaphrodite').<sup>48</sup> She is portraying herself here as an unnatural being, as a 'Mannweib'—a 'mannish woman' in the negative

<sup>46</sup> Grimmelshausen, *Courasche*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 121.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 36.

sense. We know from contemporary English sermon literature, for instance, that the term hermaphrodite was used to castigate 'our Mannish, Impudent, and inconstant Female sex [who are] Hermaphradited, and transformed into men'.<sup>49</sup> In other ways, too, she is portrayed as an unnatural woman, for she is barren and can only bring forth money. Having given up soldiering, she becomes a peddler following the army, and then a thief and confidence-trickster. At the end of the story she is said to be a general in the army of the gypsies, so she has found her own nomadic alternative society, in which she is the leader and from which she can prey on settled society.

Courasche is an attractive character, larger than life, with her racy narrative style, her self-mockery, her awareness and defiance of what virtuous people think of her, and her ability to pick herself up and start all over again, but she is also a highly transgressive figure. She overturns the social order not just by wearing trousers and going to war. When her second husband hatches a plan to beat her on their wedding night to show her who is master, and then lines his friends up to witness her humiliation, she turns the tables on him, wrests the stick out of his hand, and gives him a beating. She sets out a seven-point marriage contract for her sex-slave Springinsfeld, making him agree to what the woman normally had to agree to. Courasche is godless and immoral, knows it, and glories in it.

After all the misdeeds which she herself gleefully narrates, the reader expects her to get her come-uppance and to be, if not severely punished, then at least disciplined and tamed.<sup>50</sup> Nothing of the sort occurs, for she is an allegorical figure, the monstrous 'Frau Welt' ('Lady World'), the very embodiment of the evils and temptations of the world, and as such indestructible. 'Frau Welt' was often depicted in sculptures and illustrations as attractive and seductive when viewed from the front, but covered in sores and vermin when viewed from the back. If Courasche is Frau Welt, then it stands to reason that she cannot die at the end, for, as a mythical figure, she is superhuman and therefore immortal. Among all the warrior women in

<sup>49</sup> Quoted from Clare Everett, 'Venus in Drag: Female Transvestism and the Construction of Sex Difference in Renaissance England', in Andrew Lynch and Philippa Maddern (eds.), *Venus and Mars: Engendering Love and War in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1995), 191–212, at 202.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Becker-Cantarino, 'Dr. Faustus and Runagate Courage: Theorizing Gender in Early Modern German Literature', in Lynne Tatlock (ed.), *The Graph of Sex and the German Text: Gendered Culture in Early Modern Germany 1500–1700* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 27–44.

Linda Ellen Feldman, 'The Rape of Frau Welt. Transgression, Allegory and the Grotesque Body in Grimmelshausen's *Courasche*', *Daphnis*, 20 (1991), 61–80.

literature down the centuries, Courasche stands out for the relish with which she regales us with her many vices and immoral deeds, but even more for the fact that these deeds are not punished. Courasche is neither killed nor tamed, and, from an early modern point of view, this indeed makes her what she calls herself, ‘des Teufels Schwager’ (‘the devil’s cousin’). When she makes her next appearance, in Grimmelshausen’s later novel *Springinsfeld* (1670), she is still wearing trousers, but this time Turkish trousers, linking her with the arch-enemy of the Germans in the seventeenth century. Courasche is immortal and invincible, at least until 300 years later, when Brecht makes her into a not very bright, skirt-wearing mother in his play *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (‘Mother Courage and her Children’, first performed in 1941).

## Chastity and the warrior woman

If the sexually voracious warrior woman is one common imagining, then the chaste virginal warrior woman is the other side of the coin, ‘conversely but not contradictorily’, as Antonia Fraser remarks.<sup>51</sup> Where an early nineteenth-century literary warrior such as Schiller’s Joan of Arc has to rise above the emotion of romantic love, the early modern woman has to rise above sexual passion and espouse chastity. In doing so, she is using reason to discipline desire, and this brings her closer to the male ideal. Such a figure, so different in every way from Sophonisbe, is depicted by Lohenstein in his verse tragedy *Epicharis* (1665).<sup>52</sup> The historical Epicharis was an ex-slave who took part in the unsuccessful Pisonian Conspiracy against the tyrannical emperor Nero, and who died in AD 65. According to Tacitus’ *Annals* (Book 24, chapters 51 and 57)—one of Lohenstein’s chief sources, along with Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin’s novel *Ariane* (1632)—Epicharis tried to rouse the conspirators from their lethargy and timorousness and depose Nero, and then attempted to involve the fleet in the conspiracy. The fleet’s commander, Volusius Proculus, disclosed the plot and Epicharis was arrested. She refused to betray the other members of the group, even under torture. When she was being brought back to be tortured again,

<sup>51</sup> Fraser, *Warrior Queens*, 11–12.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, *Epicharis*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Abteilung II: *Dramen*, vol. 1: Text and vol. 2: Kommentar, ed. Lothar Mundt (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

carried bound to a chair—her limbs were broken, so she could not walk—she strangled herself with her own bonds.

In contrast to the six earlier tragedies about the conspiracy in Latin, English, French, and Spanish, Lohenstein is the first to make Epicharis the centre of the action, as Lothar Mundt has shown.<sup>53</sup> Even Tristan L'Hermite (1601–55), who makes Epicharis the driving force in the conspiracy in his play *La Mort de Seneque* ('Seneca's Death', 1644), still presents Seneca as the protagonist. Because Epicharis is so central in Lohenstein's drama, questions of gender are also at the heart of the play.<sup>54</sup> Right from the start, she is portrayed as being more a man than the men; for instance in Act I, when she says to the hesitant men: 'Ich selbst wil greiffen an // Wo mehr kein Männer-Hertz in eurem Busen stecket' ('I myself will attack because there is no manly heart left in your bosoms').<sup>55</sup> It is clear that she is no ordinary woman, but has been exceptional from birth:

Der Himmel hat sich mir so ungemeigt erzeuget:  
Daß ich: ob Mutter-Milch / ob mich ein Wild gesäuget  
Ob Klippen oder wer sonst meine Eltern sind /  
Viel Jahre nicht gewußt.<sup>56</sup>

Heaven showed itself so unfavourable to me that for many years I did not know if I was suckled by a mother or by a wild animal, whether cliffs or someone else were my parents.

This wild manly woman is a cross-dresser.<sup>57</sup> She explains in Act I how, on her way to Rome, she had to dress up as a man on several occasions, and then as a soldier. It is 'vermummt als ein Soldat' ('disguised as a soldier', Act I, line 733)<sup>58</sup> that she wants to take part in the actual overthrowing of Nero.

In contrast to the virago Epicharis, Natalis, one of the other conspirators, says of Proculus, the man who will afterwards betray them, that he is 'von der Zung ein Mann / ein Weib... in der That' ('he's a man in his speech but a woman in his deeds'),<sup>59</sup> and in the first scene in Act II between Proculus and Epicharis, Lohenstein brilliantly illustrates the contrast between them by linguistic means. Proculus holds forth for ninety-five of the scene's 132 lines and distinguishes himself by the flowery Baroque rhetoric

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. ii. 615–27.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. ii. 627.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. i. 284.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. i. 285.

<sup>57</sup> Jane O. Newman, 'Sex "in strange places": The Split Text of Gender in Lohenstein's "Epicharis" (1665)', *Chloe*, 19 (1994), 349–82.

<sup>58</sup> Lohenstein, *Epicharis*, i. 316.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. i. 294.

in which he pays court to Epicharis, while she answers with sober soldierly brevity. She refers to his desire to possess her as ‘Wahn’ (‘delusion’) and ‘Thorheit’ (‘folly’), setting them against ‘Recht’ (‘law’) and ‘Vernunft’ (‘reason’), while he talks about pearls and rubies, lilies and tulips, fire and flames, the sun, the temple of his heart, and other conventional elements of love poetry. She finally brings the scene to a close with the words: ‘Ich mag nicht länger hören’ (‘I don’t want to listen to this any more’, Act II, line 127).<sup>60</sup> She tries to dampen his ardour by using reason, reminding him that she is a freedwoman and so below him in rank. But her chastity is an essential precondition for her heroism.

All the male conspirators surrender in the course of the play, betraying their fellow plotters. Epicharis resists to the last, managing to cheat Nero of his victory over her with her final breath. Nero and his wife Sabina Poppaea come to watch Epicharis being tortured, to feast their eyes on her broken body with pornographic relish. She hurls defiance at Nero in speech after speech as they torture her, telling him to watch as she strangles herself, and thus exhibiting extraordinary steadfastness and courage in her martyr’s death.<sup>61</sup> The only figure in the group of conspirators who is as virtuous as she is the Stoic philosopher Seneca, and he also takes his own life. Sarah Colvin argues that, by showing us a virago who has the courage to do what none of the men (except Seneca) manage to do, Lohenstein is writing ‘a drama about the need for heroism in *men*’.<sup>62</sup> As with other portrayals of the manly woman, the gender order is not overturned by a figure such as Epicharis, but confirmed. The exceptional woman, the virago, only does what she does because the men, whose proper business it is, do not take on the task. She thereby comes closer actually to being a man.

## Heroism in a skirt

If chastity can excuse the woman warrior’s assumption of trousers, wearing a skirt can excuse her being a warrior in the first place. A good example is 34-year-old Gesche (or Jeske) Meiburg, who helped to defend her home town of Braunschweig when it was besieged by Duke Friedrich Ulrich of

<sup>60</sup> Lohenstein, *Epicharis* i. 326.

<sup>61</sup> See Pierre Béhar, *Silesia Tragica: épanouissement et fin de l'école dramatique silésienne dans l'œuvre tragique de Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635–1683)*, 2-vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), i. 118.

<sup>62</sup> Colvin, *The Rhetorical Feminine*, 77.



Figure 21. Gesche Meiburg (1581–1617), Broadsheet 1615.

Braunschweig-Lüneburg in 1615. Her heroic deed was publicized in no fewer than four contemporary illustrated broadsheets, and in all of them her female dress is as prominent as her military weapons (Fig. 21). In another of these broadsheets, published in Lübeck a year later, the anonymous artist emphasizes her femininity by giving her a decorative plaited hairdo and a laced bodice and ruffled collar. He contrasts these feminine attributes with an arsenal of weapons surrounding her: a musket leans diagonally across her like a barrier, a battle-axe stands vertically behind her, there is a small heap of stones and a sword on the parapet in front of her.<sup>63</sup> The verses on all four

<sup>63</sup> ‘Warhaftige Abcontrafactur / Von einer Braunschweigischen Jungfrau / mit Namen Gesche Magdeburgs / eines Ladenmachers Tochter / ihres alters von 34. Jahren / welche sich mit schiessen und andern gewehren / gantz Ritterlich gehalten hat / etc.’ (Lübeck: Jürgen Creutzberger, c.1616), in Wolfgang Harms (ed.), *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlung der Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 143; see too ‘Warhaftige Contrafactur Einer Braunschweigischen Jungkraw Gesche Meiburgs genandt / eines Ladenmachers Tochter / ihres Alters bey 34. Jahren: welche sich in nähester Belägerung der Statt Braunschweig / mit schiessen vnd anderen Wöhren gantz ritterlich verhalten hat (Augsburg: bey Daniel Döring, c.1616)’, ibid. 144. Grateful thanks are due to Wolfgang Harms

broadsheets emphasize that Gesche has God's approval for her manly deeds and that she is defending her city in its hour of need. She is not a warrior woman on the rampage, nor is there any question of a masquerade on her part. The implication of her female dress is that she knows her proper sphere and will return to it when the danger is over.

This conflict between femininity and active participation in war is central to the mythical construction of the best-known historical cross-dressed woman warrior, Joan of Arc. The historical woman was a determined cross-dresser who put on men's clothing to lead the French troops, and who insisted on her trousers even after her arrest and in the teeth of considerable opposition. When told that she was to be burned at the stake she recanted, admitted everything her captors wanted, and put on women's clothing. But after only two days in prison she had returned to her male attire and had gone back to her previous denials of guilt.

Joan is the subject of Schiller's verse tragedy, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, discussed above in Chapter 5.<sup>64</sup> Schiller knew a great deal about the historical Joan, so he was aware of her cross-dressing. In her soliloquy in the last scene of the prologue before her departure for the French court, Johanna tells us that God's instructions to her are to unwoman herself and, by encasing herself in bronze and steel, to transform herself into a warrior:

In rauhes Erz sollst du die Glieder schnüren,  
Mit Stahl bedecken deine zarte Brust,  
Nicht Männerliebe darf dein Herz berühren,  
Mit sündgen Flammen eitler Erdenlust,  
Nie wird der Brautkranz deine Locke zieren,  
Dir blüht kein lieblich Kind an deiner Brust,  
Doch werd ich dich mit kriegerischen Ehren,  
Vor allen Erdenfrauen dich verklären.<sup>65</sup>

You should corset your limbs in rough bronze, cover your tender breast with steel. No man's love may touch your heart with the sinful flames of vain earthly desire.

for these two references. Gesche Meiburg or Meiburgias is discussed by Ulrich Rublack, 'Metze und Magd. Krieg und die Bildfunktion des Weiblichen in deutschen Städten der Frühen Neuzeit', in Sibylle Backmann *et al.* (eds.), *Ehrkonzepte in der Frühen Neuzeit. Identitäten und Abgrenzungen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 199–222.

<sup>64</sup> The play was first published in the *Kalender auf das Jahr 1802. Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie von Schiller* (Berlin: Unger, 1801).

<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963), 16–17.

The bridal wreath shall never adorn your locks. No sweet child shall flourish at your breast. But I will transfigure you above all earthly women with military honours.

This unwomaning goes hand in hand with chastity and renunciation of motherhood, that is, with the denial of her femininity. Johanna does not wear a full suit of armour, however; she is described in the stage directions at the beginning of Act II, scene 4 as wearing a helmet and breastplate but otherwise female clothing. Not that the skirt makes her softer and more womanly; quite to the contrary. As Gail Hart points out, it makes her even more like Athene or Minerva in appearance and less like the historical Joan of Arc.<sup>66</sup> But it keeps her visible as a woman and so, in spite of her cold-blooded killing of Montgomery before our very eyes in Act II, scene 5, she can still die a martyr's death at the end of the play because she is not really usurping man's place in the social order. She remains visibly on the right side of the boundary marked out for women in the binary system. But her skirt is not the only thing that makes her heroic death possible. The other element of supreme importance is Johanna's virginity—which also means her chastity, of course.

But no matter how chaste she is, the woman warrior who cross-dresses always runs the risk of being seen as something monstrous. In the discussion of heroic maidens in Chapter 5 it was pointed out that, in his play of 1889, Emil Taubert reminds us of the dangerous potential of such a historical figure as Eleonore Prohaska, who died heroically during the Napeolonic Wars, by talking about her Medusa-like locks at the moment when she cuts her hair and dresses as a soldier.<sup>67</sup> Even in Manfred Karge's gripping monologue for one actress, *Jacke wie Hose* ('It's Six of One and Half-a-dozen of the Other', 1982), the protagonist, a woman who passes as a man for most of her life, reveals herself as a woman in her German soldier's uniform to avoid being shot as a deserter by two SS men. They want to rape her instead, and it is as a woman that she kills for the first and last time, shooting them to save herself. Women masquerading as men are not entitled to kill men. They may only do so when visible as women.

<sup>66</sup> Gail K. Hart, 'Re-dressing History: Mother Nature, Mother Isabeau, the Virgin Mary, and Schiller's *Jungfrau*', *Women in German Yearbook*, 14 (1999), 91–107, at 101.

<sup>67</sup> See Ch. 5, 169.

## Woman made man

One of the commonest motives attributed to women who cross-dress and go to war is that they do so to be near the man they love.<sup>68</sup> This is the case in Friedrich Albrecht Karcher's novel *Die Freischärlerin* (1851),<sup>69</sup> about the popular uprising in the Palatinate in 1849. Karcher's novel need only be discussed briefly, for its main purpose is to give a very full but wooden account of the revolution, framed by a rather contrived plot. Flora loves the fervent democrat Robert. When the revolution breaks out Robert joins the armed struggle. Thanks to the machinations of an evil Jesuit, Flora thinks Robert is unfaithful. When she discovers he is not, she has no way to tell him that she now knows he was faithful all along and loves him still, except to dress as a man and seek him out on campaign. She then becomes determined to fight for freedom just like a man, and to die for her country. Her role as cross-dressed fighter is contrasted with Röschen, the traditional wife of Robert's friend Benno, who lends her husband moral support but remains within the limits of her female role. The cross-dresser is brought to order by being shot in combat, and Flora is buried on the hillside where she died. Robert, Benno, and the conventionally feminine Röschen emigrate to America.

The heroine of the much better-known story by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825–98), *Gustav Adolfs Page* ('King Gustavus Adolphus's Page', 1882), set during the Thirty Years War, also goes to war for motives of love.<sup>70</sup> The story centres on August von Leubelfing, the page of the title, in whose arms the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus died after the Battle of Lützen in 1632. August von Leubelfing is a historical figure, but Meyer turns him into a transvestite girl. The story begins as a comedy, set in Nuremberg in the house of a wealthy merchant. The merchant has volunteered his only son to be the king's page, but the son is a coward with no interest in the military life. His female cousin Augoste von Leubelfing, on

<sup>68</sup> See David Hopkin, 'The World Turned Upside Down: Female Soldiers in the French Armies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', in *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians: Experiences and Perceptions of the French Wars, 1790–1820* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 77–95.

<sup>69</sup> Friedrich August Karcher, *Die Freischärlerin* (Kaiserslautern: Ph.Rh.Mahla, 1851).

<sup>70</sup> Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Gustav Adolfs Page*, in *Sämtliche Werke in zwei Bänden*. Vollständiger Text nach den Ausgaben letzter Hand. Mit einem Nachwort von Erwin Laaths (Munich: Winkler, 1968).

the other hand, is a tomboy and an excellent rider and likes wearing men's clothes, in particular her late father's Swedish uniform with the hole in it from the sword-thrust that killed him at the age of 19 in a duel defending her mother's honour. Auguste idolizes the Swedish king and even dreams about him, so is happy to take her cousin's place to be near her idol, though she knows that the king's two previous pages were killed in combat. While she is off, putting on her father's clothes and packing her bags, the young officer sent to fetch her laughs at her cousin's lack of military valour and dresses him in a maid's cap. Thus, at the point where Auguste takes on a male identity and steals her cousin's name, that cousin becomes a girl—the familiar motif of the woman in male garb emasculating the men of her family. Gust, as she is now known, masquerades as a boy, living out the fantasy of her love in close proximity to the object of it, the king, but without his knowledge. Meyer describes Gust's feelings for the king in terms of passionate love and palpitating sexuality:

Eine zärtliche und wilde, selige und ängstliche Fabel hatte der Page schon neben seinem Helden gelebt, ohne daß der arglose König eine Ahnung dieses verstohlenen Glückes gehabt hätte. Berauschende Stunden, gerade nach vollendeten achtzehn unmündigen Jahren beginnend und dies auslöschen wie die Sonne einen Schatten! Eine Jagd, eine Flucht süßer und stolzer Gefühle, quälender Befürchtungen, verhehlter Wonnen, klopfender Pulse, beschleunigter Atemzüge, soviel nur eine junge Brust fassen und ein leichtsinniges Herz genießen kann in der Vorstunde einer tödenden Kugel oder am Vorabend einer beschämenden Entlarvung!<sup>71</sup>

The page had already lived out a tender and wild, happy, and anxious drama at the side of his hero without the unsuspecting king having a notion of this snatched happiness. Intoxicating hours, beginning just when one has completed eighteen years and come of age, wiping these years out as the sun dispels shadow! Sweet and proud emotions, tormenting fears, concealed joys, a hammering pulse, quickened breaths hunted, chased each other, to the extent that only a young breast can comprehend and a frivolous heart can enjoy in the hour before a mortal shot or in the evening before a shame-making revelation!

Gust rides everywhere at the king's side, and when they return to their quarters in the evening they lead an almost domestic life together, with the king playing chess or draughts with her or telling stories, and every now and then running his hand over her hair. It seems, says Meyer, from the stories the king tells his page, that he was unknowingly enjoying the charm of an

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 141.

attentive woman behind the masquerade of a well-mannered boy. A typical complicated Meyer sub-plot mirroring the main one leads Gust to leave the king's service for some months. However, she is able to rejoin him just before the Battle of Lützen. As history tells us, the king refuses to wear the armour that would have saved his life but chooses his buff coat instead. The last section of the story takes us at midnight to a vicarage behind the Swedish lines. When the vicar opens the door he sees a badly injured and very sick young person (the non-gender-specific term 'Mensch' is used) with an open wound in the head, accompanied by a dead man who is being lifted from a horse. This is the mortally wounded Gust accompanying the body of the dead king. Gust sacrificed herself for the king, says their companion—'No, for me', interrupts her cousin from Nuremberg, who suddenly appears out of nowhere. When Gust dies shortly after, her corpse and that of the king are laid out side by side in the church. The driving force of the plot is Gust's love for the king, a love she can never satisfy, not even by living as a boy, but which nonetheless brings about the erotically charged atmosphere between the king and his servant. Her feelings are those of a woman for a man, and they are in constant tension with her outward appearance. In spite of her desire, she remains a virgin and never gets to consummate her love. Ultimately, she has to die to be united with her beloved. We are told how, as his page, she slept beside him in the camp but on the other side of a wall. The wall is removed after they have both died and their corpses lie together in the church.

Gender confusion is central to the story. Auguste becomes August, and then Gust; Gustavus and Gust become one in death, and there are other cross-dressers in the story too. But the ultimate gender reversal occurs at the end. As Gust lies dying from her wounds, she says to the vicar:

'Ich bin eine große Sünderin.' 'Ein großer Sünder', unterbrach sie der Pfarrer streng; 'Ihr redet irre! Ihr seid der Page August Leubelfing, ehelicher Sohn des nürembergischen Patriziers und Handelsherrn Arbogast Leubelfing.'<sup>72</sup>

'I am a very sinful girl.' 'A very sinful boy,' interjected the vicar sternly. 'You are talking wildly. You are the page August Leubelfing, legitimate son of the Nuremberg patrician and merchant Arbogast Leubelfing.'

At one level the vicar is protecting the good name of the virtuous Gustavus Adolphus (twice compared to Christ in the story), of whom it must not be

<sup>72</sup> Meyer, *Gustav Adolfs Page*, 171.

said that he lived at close quarters with a young woman not his wife. But on another level the virginal transvestite Gust, who has committed the ultimate transgression of living as a man, is rewarded for her bravery and self-sacrifice by being accorded permanently the male gender she herself sought. After she has died, her cousin asks if he can now have his own name and identity back, and is told that he cannot. His name will belong forever to Auguste, who fought and died in his stead. This is the ultimate unwomaning. Auguste von Leubelfing has been rewarded for her chastity by being declared permanently a man. One might also say that she is now stuck with the gender she wrongfully assumed.<sup>73</sup> She has also become her own father. She wears his clothes to go to war—the motif of the father authorizing the actions of the warrior daughter—and she dies for her love, just as her father did.

The conclusion that has to be drawn is that a cross-dressed woman warrior is highly likely to be depicted as a monstrous being who emasculates her menfolk and is a danger to her own children. Wearing a skirt is the guarantee that she knows her place and will return to it at the earliest opportunity, so if she sticks to her women's dress she has a far higher chance of being depicted as a martyr and of her death being seen as exemplary. The next best thing is for her to reveal herself as a woman before the conclusion of the plot or the falling of the final curtain. Women who persist in wearing trousers are only acceptable if they preserve a strict chastity and if they have patriarchal authority for what they are doing, whether this has been given them by God or by a male relative. If the woman warrior kills, she must expiate it with her death. Grimmelshausen's Courasche, who gleefully cross-dresses, kills, and has sex with a large number of men, is the exception that proves this rule. She is not a real woman, however, but an allegory, the immortal representation of the temptations of the wicked world.

<sup>73</sup> For a somewhat different interpretation of this story see Gertrud Lehnert, *Wenn Frauen Männerkleider tragen. Geschlecht und Maskerade in Literatur und Geschichte* (Munich: dtv, 1997), 89–95.

# 7

## Women's Imaginings: Women Warriors in Fiction

As we have seen, a procession of warrior women from antiquity (the Amazons), ancient history (Sophonisbe), the Bible (Judith), Nordic and Germanic myth (Brünhild and the Valkyries), medieval history (Bohemian warrior maidens, Joan of Arc), and, in a few cases, more recent historical women such as Charlotte Corday and Eleonore Prochaska marches down through German culture from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. In each age, male writers and artists take these pre-existing figures and re-imagine them according to their contemporary needs. By and large, women writers stay well clear of these tropes almost until the twentieth century, when, it seems, they at last feel empowered to protest against the vision of woman that these works convey. There are, of course, some exceptions to this late engagement with the imaginings of men. Princess Maria Antonia Walpurgis composed an opera about Amazons in the 1760s, Christine Westphalen wrote a play glorifying Charlotte Corday in 1804, Karoline von Woltmann retold the story of the Bohemian Amazons in 1815, and Elisabeth Grube depicted Eleonore Prochaska in 1864 in her play about the Lützow Volunteers. But these works—discussed elsewhere—are exceptions.

What women writers do most often, and men, it appears, do not do at all,<sup>1</sup> is to invent completely fictitious women warriors, dress them in trousers, and place them in a war zone in a realistic setting, whether contemporary or historical. This enables women writers to think the

<sup>1</sup> The only women warriors invented by male writers in this study are the allegorical figure of Grimmelshausen's Courasche and Bucholtz's idealized virago Valiska, both early modern creations. Meyer's story about Gustavus Adolphus' page-boy comes closest to inventing a woman warrior who inhabits the real world. He does so by taking a real page-boy and imagining him as a cross-dressed girl.

unthinkable, to meditate on woman's role in a time of national upheaval, to consider woman's capacity not just for agency but also for leadership and even for violence, to depict woman's survival in a disordered world, and to think about how a woman reconciles her destiny as wife, mother, daughter, or sister with the exceptional situation that is war. In writing fictions about historical events, these women writers have made an important—indeed, pioneering—contribution to the development of the historical novel, which as a genre scarcely existed in German at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Historical novels by such authors as Naubert, Huber, Lohmann, and Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, all writing around 1800, were translated into English and read in Britain, before Walter Scott had made the historical novel his own and, in his turn, influenced German writers.<sup>3</sup>

Virtually all the works in which women imagine a woman going to war are prose fiction, works to be enjoyed in an intimate setting or consumed in private by a solitary reader, who we may imagine was very often another women.<sup>4</sup> Writers and readers can enjoy the transgressive behaviour of the heroine, who has a freedom of movement and an autonomy that they themselves, in most cases, did not have.<sup>5</sup> This chapter discusses six works of prose fiction which use the figure of the woman at war in very different ways. Friederike Lohmann and Benedikte Naubert go back to the early modern period for their war settings, and are at the same time the most conservative in their reinforcement of patriarchal notions about women's role. Naubert's *Geschichte der Gräfin Thekla von Thurn oder Scenen aus dem dreissigjährigen Kriege* ('The History of Countess Thekla von Thurn, or Scenes from the Thirty Years War', 1788) places her heroine into the midst of the latter conflict, while Lohmann's *Die Talmühle* ('The Mill in the Valley', before 1811) is set during the Schmalkaldic War of 1546–7. Two other authors depict the counter-revolutionary uprising in the Vendée

<sup>2</sup> See the statistics given on the webpage of the 'Projekt Historischer Roman': <http://www.uibk.ac.at/germanistik/histrom/>.

<sup>3</sup> See Hilary Brown, 'German Women Writers in English Short Story Anthologies of the 1820s', *Modern Language Review*, 92 (2002), 620–31.

<sup>4</sup> See Ulrike Prokop, 'Die Einsamkeit der Imagination. Geschlechterkonflikt und literarische Produktion um 1770', in Gisela Brinker-Gabler (ed.), *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, 2 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), i. 325–65; Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche, Werke, Wirkung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000); Helen Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era 1770–1820: Determined Dilettantes* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> See Mechtild Vahsen, *Die Politisierung des weiblichen Subjekts. Deutsche Romanautorinnen und die Französische Revolution (1790–1820)* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2000), 40–4.

in 1793–6 from two different political standpoints: Therese Huber's *Die Familie Seldorf* ('The Seldorf Family', 1795/6) was written shortly after the struggle and takes a pro-revolutionary stance, while Caroline de la Motte Fouqué's *Das Heldennäidchen aus der Vendée* ('The Heroic Maiden from the Vendée', 1816) was written twenty years later from a royalist perspective. Huber questions a whole series of accepted truths, among them the dictum that a woman warrior's destiny is either marriage or death, while Fouqué, whose ideas about women were conservative, certainly makes her heroine expire heroically at the end but allows her to have a career remarkable for its resolution and daring before that. Later treatments of a similar theme include Louise Aston's *Revolution und Contrerevolution* ('Revolution and Counter-Revolution', 1849), which depicts a revolutionary woman leader during the 1848 Revolution, an event in which the author herself took part, though not as spectacularly as her heroine. Mathilde Franziska Anneke's account of another episode during the same revolution, *Memoiren einer Frau aus dem badisch-pfälzischen Feldzuge 1848/49* ('Memoirs of a Woman from the Campaign in Baden and in the Palatinate', 1853), is a non-fiction account of a real woman's participation in war. Two nationalistic plays about invented characters are concerned with the German desire for hegemony over Alsace. Josephine Grach's *Der kleine Tambour oder Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen* ('The Little Drummer Boy, or A German Heroic Maiden', 1898) is set in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1, and Maria Zischank's *Die Heldin vom Sundgau. Zeitgemäßes Spiel in zwei Aufzügen aus den Vogesenkämpfen 1914/15* ('The Heroine of Sundgau: A Play for the Times in Two Acts from the Fighting in the Vosges', published in the 1920s) is set during the struggles in Alsace at the beginning of World War I.

## Women in early modern wars

Benedikte Naubert's *Geschichte der Gräfin Thekla von Thurn oder Scenen aus dem dreyzigjährigen Kriege*—the seventh out of some fifty works by Naubert (1756–1819)—is ambitious in length and scope.<sup>6</sup> It tells the story of the von

<sup>6</sup> See Jeannine Blackwell, 'Die verlorene Lehre der Benedikte Naubert: die Verbindung zwischen Phantasie und Geschichtsschreibung', in Helga Gallas and Magdalene Heuser (eds.), *Untersuchungen zum Roman von Frauen um 1800* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 148–59.

Thurn family against the backdrop of more than twenty years of the war.<sup>7</sup> The novel is divided into two parts and seventy-five chapters. Part I, containing the first forty-two chapters, takes us from the Defenestration of Prague in May 1618 to the Siege of Magdeburg in 1631, and relates the heroine Thekla's life up to the age of 17, though in this part of the novel Thekla's mother Sybille is the most important figure. Part II, from the Siege of Magdeburg almost up to the death of Bernhard of Saxony-Weimar in 1639, focuses on Thekla herself. The war is the motor of the plot. Sudden changes and reversals of fortune, the absence of the male members of the family because of military service, death and the grief this causes, and the fear of the female characters when living without male protection in the midst of the fighting are all motivated by the war.

A key episode in Thekla's development is the lengthy period she spends with the military masquerading as a man. Her cross-dressing, one of the most important themes in the novel, is presented with deep ambivalence by the author. Thekla first dresses as a boy in chapter 43, at the beginning of Part II. Thekla and her sister Therese are both in Magdeburg, and Thekla's masquerade enables her to discover the Imperial enemy secretly entering Magdeburg through an underground tunnel and alert the officers of the Protestant forces. In spite of this good outcome, her cross-dressing is described by her brother-in-law Colonel Falkenberg as 'Thorheiten' ('follies')<sup>8</sup> and as 'Unsinn' ('nonsense').<sup>9</sup> Already at this point in the story Naubert is conveying to her readers how negatively society judges such an unwomanly action, and how it twists Thekla's deed so as to imply that she and her brother-in-law, who is the commanding officer of the Protestant forces in Magdeburg, are in league with the enemy under Tilly.<sup>10</sup> As we know from history, Magdeburg was forced to surrender to the Imperial army. Naubert's fictional twist on this is that Falkenberg, in expectation of the arrival of the enemy, decides to make his wife and her sister put on male clothing for their protection. Magdeburg is sacked, and Therese, dressed as a man, fights to the death at her own husband's side. Both are killed, after Therese, described as a 'Heldin' ('heroine'), has entrusted her baby son to

<sup>7</sup> Benedikte Naubert, *Geschichte der Gräfin Thekla von Thurn oder Scenen aus dem dreyssigjährigen Kriege* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1788). Quotations are from <https://sophie.byu.edu> (accessed 8 Apr. 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. II, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. II, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich von Falkenberg (1580–1631) is a historical figure who actually was the commander of Magdeburg and was killed during the siege.

Thekla. As we learn later, Therese's cross-dressing can just about be regarded as acceptable because she dies, and even more so because she does so at her husband's side.

Thekla puts on men's clothes again in chapter 47 and wears them continuously until chapter 60, masquerading as her own brother Jaromir, who is presumed killed in action. Under the guise of Jaromir she spends time at the headquarters of Bernhard of Weimar, with whom she is in love, and he makes 'Jaromir' his friend. Thekla is thus engaging in two masquerades simultaneously: pretending to be a man, and pretending to be her own brother. As 'Jaromir' she is introduced to Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, and his queen, Maria Eleonore of Brandenburg. Though Naubert stresses constantly that Thekla has no choice but to pretend to be a man and to wear trousers, since her father and her surviving brother Boguslaw are away fighting in the war, her sister and brother-in-law are dead, and her mother is in far-off Silesia, her masquerade is portrayed as a cause of deep chagrin and soul-searching to her. Naubert constantly stresses how she is in danger of being socially ruined, since the only possible explanation for her conduct that society is likely to come up with is that she is engaging in it out of lust to be near the man she loves. Maria Eleonore represents the patriarchal view of women's role in the novel, and is the fierce and often unjust guardian of convention. On learning from 'Jaromir' of his sister Therese's death—in trousers—at her husband's side during the sack of Magdeburg, she cries:

Das ist groß! Das ist edel! rief sie. Ich glaubte nicht, daß ich ihr würde verzeihen können, daß sie aus den Schranken ihres Geschlechts heraus trat, und sich in männlichem Gewand mit dem Schwert an der Seite in den Streit wagte; ein Schritt, den meines Erachtens kein Frauenzimmer aus irgend einer Ursache thun sollte; aber diese Therese! Ihr Tod! Ja, ich muß ihr verzeihen, muß sie bewundern!<sup>11</sup>

'That is great! That is noble!' She cried. 'I did not think that I would be able to forgive her if she stepped out from behind the barriers of her sex and dared to enter the fray in man's costume with her sword at her side; a step that in my view no woman should undertake for any cause whatsoever; but this Therese! Her death! Yes, I have to forgive her, have to admire her!'

Therese's death and her husband's proximity excuse her cross-dressing. This is put forward as the Swedish queen's viewpoint, and she is portrayed as an

<sup>11</sup> Naubert, *Geschichte der Gräfin Thekla von Thurn oder Scenen aus dem dreyzigjährigen Kriege*. II, 103.

unsympathetic character in the novel, acting harshly towards her own daughter, the future Queen Christine of Sweden, described as 'die männliche Christine' ('the manly Christine').<sup>12</sup>

Thekla, on the other hand, the figure with whom the reader identifies, may have changed her clothing, but she never inwardly leaves her female sphere; she never completes the masquerade by acting like a man. This is something she is incapable of doing, for it appears that women's behaviour is inherent in their physiology. It is not something that is learned. Thekla blushes constantly and weeps frequently—something for which she, as 'Jaromir', is sometimes criticized: 'Thränen schicken sich für keinen Mann' ('Tears are not suitable for any man'),<sup>13</sup> is the comment of von Hastendorf, when she has burst into tears at the very thought of her beloved Bernhard of Weimar being killed. Another of the signs of feminine weakness she exhibits is that she often faints. In addition, she worries incessantly what her family will think of her transgressive actions when, as she hopes, she is eventually reunited with them, and this although she never actually uses arms or fights. She is quite right to be fearful. When she is reunited with her older brother Boguslaw in chapter 60 he lets loose a tirade of abuse at her, before ever he has heard her story. 'Verbrecherin' ('criminal'), 'Schande unsers erlauchten Hauses' ('shame of our noble house'), 'Räuberin des edlen Namens Jaromir' ('robber of the noble name of Jaromir'), 'Mörderin meines Lebens' ('murderess of my life'), are just some of the insults he hurls at her in his anger.<sup>14</sup> She is, of course, later able to convince him of her innocence. At the end of the same chapter, more or less at the beginning of the Battle of Lützen, Thekla changes back into her woman's clothes and is now free to weep incessantly.

Later in the novel, when Thekla as a woman inhabits her proper womanly sphere at the Swedish court, her double identity as Jaromir and as Thekla is discovered. She then suffers the opprobrium of the entire court for her behaviour, even though she has committed no bad action of any kind and never chose to wear man's clothes in the first place. It is not enough for a woman to be pure and virtuous in this society, she has to be seen to be pure and virtuous as well. This can only happen if she remains in her proper womanly sphere, which also means staying out of the public eye,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. II, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. II, 156.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. II, 225.

under the guardianship of male relatives.<sup>15</sup> Her cross-dressing has tainted her. This taint is only wiped away by her marriage and social elevation, through her husband, Prince Eggenberg, at the end of the novel.

This novel is therefore remarkable for the sweep of historical events it depicts, and is ground-breaking in the way it presents a heroine who lives like a man for a long period among the military. It enables readers to enjoy and identify with Thekla's escapades without ever needing to feel guilty or think that transgressive behaviour is being advocated. It does not ostensibly upset the patriarchal apple-cart, for on the surface it reinforces patriarchal norms of female behaviour very firmly indeed. It does, however, show those who implement them in society to be unjust, and always allows the reader to stay on the side of the eponymous trouser-wearing heroine.

As with Naubert's novel, the story *Die Talmühle*, by Friederike Lohmann (1749–1811), depicts a heroine who renounces her trousers as though wearing them were some kind of sin, though this heroine has actually been trained as a soldier from her childhood days.<sup>16</sup> Lohmann's story is set during the mid-sixteenth-century Schmalkaldic Wars between the German Protestant princes and the emperor Charles V. The orphaned heroine Adela grows up under the tutelage of a soldier father-figure, wearing male clothing and behaving like a boy. 'Adela hat etwas Festes, Trotziges und Kühnes' ('Adela has something firm, defiant, and daring about her'), we are told.<sup>17</sup> She can neither spin nor weave but can instead ride and groom a mettlesome horse, shoot, and use a sword. She fights alongside her adoptive father Volkmar on the Protestant side in the army of Johann Friedrich, elector of Saxony. When she is forced by Volkmar to wear girl's clothes and live like a girl, she attracts the attention of the brutal and treacherous Busso, who wants to make her his wife. She runs away to warn the elector that he is in danger, dressing again in her boy's attire to do so, and fights at his side at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547. She later pleads successfully with the emperor to spare Johann Friedrich's life, and to do this she wears female dress, so that the emperor—who, it is hinted, is her father—will be reminded of her late mother. Adela, therefore, is daring, resolute, and independent and, unlike

<sup>15</sup> See the discussion of the novel by Waltraud Maierhofer, *Hexen—Huren—Heldenweiber. Bilder des Weiblichen in Erzähltexten über den Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2005), 67–100.

<sup>16</sup> Friederike Lohmann, 'Die Talmühle', in *Sämtliche Erzählungen. Ausgabe letzter Hand, mit einem Vorworte der Verfasserin von 'Godwie Castle' ec. Ec.* (Leipzig: Carl Focke, 1844), vii. 87.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 15.

Naubert's Thekla, well capable of carrying out activities that are normally connoted male.

When she falls in love herself, however, both her independent character and her male dress are doomed. Her beloved, an officer on the Imperial side, is a typical man, not of the sixteenth, but of the early nineteenth century. He says to Adela:

Das Haus ist die Welt der Frauen, nur in seinen engen Wänden soll das sanfte, stille Wesen walten, und des Mannes Glück schaffen. Wenn Du einwilligst, mein zu sein, erwarten Dich Pflichten, die einen ächt weiblichen Sinn fordern: die Pflege // meiner alten Mutter, und eines verwais'ten Schwesternkindes, dem ich Vater ward. Prüfe Dich, Adela, und laß mich wissen, ob Deine Liebe über eine mißgeleitete Neigung siegen kann.<sup>18</sup>

The home is women's world. Only in its narrow walls shall the gentle, quiet being rule and create man's happiness. If you agree to be mine, duties await you which demand a true feminine sense: the care of my old mother and an orphaned niece whose father I have become. Examine yourself, Adela, and let me know if your love can triumph over a misdirected inclination.

At the moment when Adela is about to change back into her male dress, having pleaded with the emperor as a woman, the evil Busso kidnaps her and wants to kill both her and himself because she cannot love him. Adela, soldier, swordsman, and musketeer, is suddenly incapable of resisting Busso physically. Wearing her skirts, all she can do is to tremble and weep. Her beloved has to save her, whereupon she apologizes to him, calling herself 'das schwache Mädchen, das sich einst vermaß, ein Mann zu sein' ('the weak girl, who once upon a time had the nerve to be a man').<sup>19</sup> Then comes true abasement: 'Ach, mein Geliebter, ich fühlle wie wahr Du sprachst: Die Natur gab der Schwachen einen engen Kreis, und sanfte Pflichten . . . Meine Irrtümer habe ich abgebüßt' ('Oh, my beloved, I sense how truly you spoke. Nature accorded the weak a narrow sphere and gentle duties . . . I have atoned for my mistakes').<sup>20</sup> Even though the choice to live like a boy was not her own, even though, wearing her trousers, she fought for her beliefs, saved her prince's life, and uncovered a plot against him, she is made to ask for forgiveness. For a woman to go to war is bad enough. If she cannot be recognized as a woman, this is truly a transgression. Fortunately, love and marriage restore her to her true 'Bestimmung' or destiny, and she abases herself freely before her new master.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 56–7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

## Two perspectives on the struggle in the Vendée

Where Naubert's criticism of society's injustices towards women is *sub rosa*, Huber's, in her novel *Die Familie Seldorf*, is open. This novel is by any standard an unusual work that questions received norms both of female behaviour and of narrative form, and provides a nuanced and unsettling commentary on revolutionary politics and gender notions. The French Revolution sent political shock-waves through Germany, and one of those who was directly involved in the unrest was this novel's author, Therese Huber (1764–1829). Huber, eldest daughter of Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812), an influential professor at the new Göttingen University, first married the explorer, author, and revolutionary Georg Forster (1754–94), but was about to divorce him when he died. She then married Ludwig Ferdinand Huber (1764–1804). These details are not irrelevant to her writing. Her learning and wide, if unsystematic, reading she brought with her from her upbringing in an academic household, while through her marriage with Forster she became acquainted with revolutionary ideas. She moved with him to Mainz in 1788. Here she got to know Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, her second husband. When the French captured the city in 1788 both he and Forster played an active part in the newly-founded Mainz Republic, the first democratic 'state' on German soil. It only lasted from March to July 1793, during which time the city was besieged by the Prussian troops who ultimately captured it. Huber fled with her children to Neuchâtel in Switzerland, where she began to write *Die Familie Seldorf*. Part of it was published in 1794 in the periodical edited by Ludwig Ferdinand Huber entitled *Flora. Deutschlands Töchter geweiht von Freunden und Freundinnen des schönen Geschlechts* ('Flora: Dedicated to Germany's Daughters by Male and Female Friends of the Fair Sex'). Part I appeared in book form in 1795, Part II in 1796.<sup>21</sup>

The novel is set, not in Paris, but in the Vendée, a region of France that remained monarchist after the French Revolution and that staged an uprising against the revolutionary forces between 1793 and 1796. The protagonist is Sara Seldorf, but the novel is, as the title promises, the tale of a family. It begins in 1784 in Sara's childhood, when her father returns from

<sup>21</sup> There is a very full account of the novel and its context in Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 86–111.

the American War of Independence, and ends when the uprising in the Vendée is crushed. In the intervening period Sara is seduced by a nobleman called L. and bears him a daughter. She follows him to Paris, where she discovers that he is already married. He shoots their child by accident during the assault on the Tuileries in 1792, and Sara then joins the Jacobins, becoming a Fury: 'so löste sich ihr ganzes Wesen in Haß und Wuth' ('and so her whole being dissolved into hatred and rage').<sup>22</sup> She experiences the September massacres and the execution of Louis XVI, and loses her reason thereafter for many months. After this, she follows her companion Babet into the revolutionary army, and masquerades as a man under the name of Verrier. Here she is fighting against L., who is on the monarchist side. After his death, she promises his dying wife to take care of her son, L.'s legitimate heir. When Roger, the friend and admirer of Sara's youth, appears in the last pages and asks her to marry him, describing the idyll they will enjoy together, it looks as if the conventional happy ending is in sight and as if Roger, Sara, and L.'s son Hippolyt will form an instant family. But Sara refuses: 'O nie, nie! Rief sie schaudern—Dein reines Kinderherz neben mir, der von Geistern umringten?' ("Oh never, never!" She cried shuddering. "Your pure child's heart next to me, who am surrounded by ghosts?").<sup>23</sup> The novel ends with Roger sobbing at Sara's feet in the midst of the destruction of the Vendée, while a storm rages and lightning flashes. Sara neither dies nor marries, and her future is left genuinely open.

This refusal to indulge in conventional narrative closure is typical of the work. Huber shines a critical light on every aspect of the society she describes and on every aspect of contemporary politics.<sup>24</sup> Conventional ideas about the family are unsettled by her depiction of Sara's father's coldness and her mother's adultery, which has resulted in an illegitimate half-sister for Sara. Monarchist and revolutionary politics are depicted as equally bloody, while the ending refuses to accept the conventional view of matrimony as woman's destiny. Stephanie Hilger shows how motherhood is also called into question in the depiction of Sara's breast-milk poisoning

<sup>22</sup> Therese Huber, *Die Familie Seldorf* (Norderstedt: Zenodot, 2008), 215.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 301.

<sup>24</sup> See the Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of the Saarland by Johannes Birgfeld: *Krieg und Aufklärung* (2009), and Karin Baumgartner, 'Valorous Masculinities and Patriotism in the Texts of Early Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers', *German Studies Review*, 31 (2008), 325–44.

her own illegitimate child.<sup>25</sup> Nor is Sara turned into a heroic maiden. She goes through a trajectory, from child to deceived innocent to Fury to transvestite soldier, without Huber ever making her a heroic figure.

The narrative of her exploits as the soldier Verrier takes up only twenty pages of a 300-page novel, but is one of the most remarkable sections of the book. Sara joins the army in a state of cold indifference, having lost everything—her home, her family, her child, her honour—and therefore knows no fear: ‘die Namen Freiheit, Vaterland, schallten dumpf und bedeutungslos, wie aus Gräbern, aus ihrer verödeten Brust zurück’ (‘the words freedom, fatherland, reverberated, dull and meaningless, from her desolate breast, as though they came out of graves’).<sup>26</sup> She learns the rudiments of the soldier’s trade, and when she enters the battlefield is indifferent to danger and fights so fiercely that her comrades make her a captain immediately. Johannes Birgfeld is of the opinion that the description of Sara’s first military encounter is one of the few original images of war to be produced by any writer in the whole of eighteenth-century literature.<sup>27</sup> Sara fights out of hatred and for motives of revenge, and it is not until she herself is seriously wounded and she looks death in the face that her feelings of revenge leave her. But when she realizes that her seducer L.’s coffin is being treated by the monarchists like the shrine of a saint, she leads her men in a wild charge—‘Sieg oder Tod’ (‘victory or death’), she cries—and captures it.<sup>28</sup>

Huber depicts her as becoming more and more accustomed to the hideous scenes of war, but also as beginning to feel sympathy for and to succour its innocent victims. She brings food to the women and children hiding in the forest, for instance. When she finally gets back to Saumur and the ruins of L.’s chateau, she is returning to the scenes of her childhood and her first love. In the ruins she finds L.’s dying wife and their child and her brother Theodor. This enables her to put off her savage soldier’s persona and become a woman again, though she ends the novel a psychologically and emotionally damaged one.

Huber’s depiction of the woman warrior is a remarkable experiment in showing a woman actually acting like a man. There are no fainting-fits, no

<sup>25</sup> Stephanie M. Hilger, ‘The French Revolution in Therese Huber’s *Die Familie Seldorf (1795–1796)*’, in Carl Niekerk and Stefani Engelstein (eds.), *Violence, Culture, Aesthetics: Germany 1789–1938* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, in press).

<sup>26</sup> Huber, *Seldorf*, 256.

<sup>27</sup> Birgfeld, *Krieg und Aufklärung*, 415.

<sup>28</sup> Huber, *Seldorf*, 262.

tears, no squeamishness at the sight of blood, nor does she feel fear or need rest more than her men. When she is badly wounded, she hides the extent of her injuries from the doctors and treats them herself at the cost of terrible pain, because she fears that her sex will be discovered. Huber and Schiller are the only writers to go this far in depicting a woman warrior, and only Huber lets the woman live at the end.

A contrast both to Huber's revolutionary sympathies and the patriarchal view of woman's role put forward by Naubert and Lohmann is another novel about the uprising in the Vendée, but one written at a distance of twenty years from the events: namely, Caroline de la Motte Fouqué's *Das Heldenmädchen aus der Vendée* (1816).<sup>29</sup> Where Huber depicts the conflict from a revolutionary point of view, Fouqué (1775–1831) does so from a monarchist perspective. Fouqué was born Caroline von Briest, and on her first marriage became Caroline von Rochow. The name by which she is known as a writer came from her second marriage, to Friedrich Heinrich Karl, baron de la Motte Fouqué, whose trilogy *Der Held des Nordens* was discussed in Chapter 3 as part of the analysis of the Brünhild figure.<sup>30</sup> It was a second marriage for both parties, and after it Fouqué developed into a prolific writer of novels, memoirs, and pedagogic texts, as well as working as an editor and journalist. She was very aware of contemporary debates about politics, German and Prussian patriotism, and gender roles, for she and her husband were acquainted with all the leading writers and intellectuals who congregated in Berlin in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Many of them, such as Fichte, Varnhagen von Ense, Chamisso, Eichendorff, Arnim, Brentano, August Wilhelm Schlegel, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Bernhardi, Kleist, and others, visited the Fouqué's at the country estate belonging to Caroline's family, Schloss Nennhausen, 65 kilometres north-west of Berlin near the town of Rathenow. When the Prussian army began its ultimately successful assault on Napoleon in 1813, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and Caroline's two sons by her first marriage all joined the

<sup>29</sup> Caroline De La Motte Fouqué, *Das Heldenmädchen aus der Vendée*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: bei Gerhard Fleischer dem Jüngeren 1816).

<sup>30</sup> See Petra Kabus, ‘‘Die Feder in einer deutschen Frauenhand’’. Caroline de la Motte Fouqué als Teilnehmerin an Kunstbetrieb und Geschlechtscharakterdebatte in Deutschland zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts sowie als Exempel für geschlechtsspezifisch motivierte Ausgrenzungsmechanismen der literarischen Kritik’, in Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, *Erzählungen und Lyrik. Mit einer Einführung zu Leben und Werk der Autorin* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003), and Elisa Müller-Adams, ‘Daß die Frau zur Frau redete’. *Das Werk der Caroline de la Motte Fouqué als Beispiel für weibliche Literaturproduktion der frühen Restaurationszeit* (St Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2003).

Army of Liberation, though Friedrich had to leave after two months because of poor health.<sup>31</sup> French troops occupied Nennhausen in that year. Fouqué was therefore living during the so-called Wars of Liberation but writing about the war in the Vendée.

One might be tempted to think that her standpoint on women as warriors is clear. She was personally very close to members of the Prussian court, as was her husband, and she espoused a monarchical and conservative point of view rather than a revolutionary one. So one would expect her to display an equally conservative view of women's role, as expressed in her patriotic *Ruf an die deutschen Frauen* ('Summons to German Womanhood') of 1812.<sup>32</sup> She says there, for instance: 'Wähnet nicht, den schwachen Händen soll das Schwert anvertraut, oder die heilige Ordnung des Lebens in irgend einer Art umgekehrt werden. Niemals wandelt die Natur ihre ewigen Gesetze' ('Do not think that the sword shall be entrusted to weak hands or the sacred order of human life be reversed in any way. Nature never changes her own eternal laws').<sup>33</sup> Fouqué, it appears, does not and cannot legitimate a woman who, in real life, goes to war.

What, then, did she think women's role in a time of national awakening and crisis might be? That she had been considering this just before the date of the novel we are discussing is shown by two works she published at the end of, or just after, Napoleon's final defeat. The first of these is the *Bildungsroman Edmunds Wege und Irrwege* ('Edmund's Journeys and Meanderings', 1815).<sup>34</sup> The aristocrat Edmund reclaims his honour and then goes to war to fight for his country, but his education is only complete when he learns about patriotism from a woman. 'Successful masculinity in Fouqué's text is yoked to nationalism, patriotism, and the sword', writes Karin Baumgartner.<sup>35</sup> After the war, 'Edmund is charged with creating a new social order'. So women can be teachers, but men are still the active sex. But Fouqué's thinking does not stop there. If masculinity, war, and patriotism are at the heart of *Edmunds*

<sup>31</sup> Caroline's sons were Gustav Adolf Rochus von Rochow (1792–1847), later Prussian minister, and Theodor Heinrich Rochus von Rochow (1794–1854), later ambassador to St Petersburg.

<sup>32</sup> Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, 'Ruf an die deutschen Frauen', in *Texte zur Stellung der Frau in der Gesellschaft, zu ihrer Erziehung und Bildung*, ed. Petra Kabus (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005), 163–78.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 166.

<sup>34</sup> See Karin Baumgartner, 'Valorous Masculinities and Patriotism in the Texts of Early Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers', *German Studies Review*, 31 (2008), 325–44, and id., *Public Voices. Political Discourse in the Writings of Caroline de la Motte Fouqué* (Bern–Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Baumgartner, *Public Voices*, 337.

*Wege und Irrwege*, femininity, war, and patriotism are the subject of *Das Heldenmädchen aus der Vendée* (1816).<sup>36</sup>

Her choice of plot and storyline is an interesting one. She could have confirmed the passive and supportive role that women were supposed to play in wartime by making her heroine into a 'Heldenmutter' ('hero's mother') or 'Kriegerbraut' ('warrior's bride'), whose task it is to express pride in the living hero and then grief over the dead one, rather like the soldier's bride in Weiße's *Amazonen-Lieder* discussed in Chapter 2. Fouqué's heroine is and does none of these things. She cross-dresses, carries weapons, and goes to war, moving around with the army for a considerable period of time and actually passing as a man. Fouqué depicts her doing this alongside a considerable number of real historical figures, and in real places and battles, and she takes as her source the memoirs of Marie-Louise-Victoire La Rochejaquelein.<sup>37</sup>

Fouqué's heroine is the young countess Elisabeth de la Rochefoucault, who decides to masquerade as a boy and go to war to fight for the Vendees and for God and king. She does so at the side of the man she loves, the Prince de Talmont—a historical figure. He is executed at the end of Book I, so Elisabeth sails for England in Book II to carry out his mission to get help from the English. When the French émigrés and the English finally reach France, the landing is botched, the Vendees under Sombreuil are defeated by Maréchal Hoche, and Elisabeth dies. But the story is a great deal more interesting than this brief resumé indicates. Elisabeth goes to war out of a sense of inborn duty and for reasons of patriotism. She says: 'Ich kann nicht vergessen, daß ich eine La Rochefoucault bin, und die wissen zusterben, wenn die Freiheit bedroht ist' ('I cannot forget that I am a La Rochefoucault, and they know they have to die when freedom is threatened').<sup>38</sup> To do this she has to leave her safe feminine world and put on male attire. At the moment when she actually changes clothes, the transgressive nature of this deed is highlighted. Elisabeth prays: 'vergieb, wenn des Herzens Unruhe mich voreilig auf unnatürlich fremde Wege treibt!' ('forgive me,

<sup>36</sup> Birgit Wägenbaur discusses the novel briefly in her *Die Pathologie der Liebe. Literarische WeiblichkeitSENTWÜFFE um 1800* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1996), 260–3, as does Todd Kontje, *Women, the Novel, and the German Nation 1771–1871: Domestic Fiction in the Fatherland* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 98–107.

<sup>37</sup> Marie-Louise-Victoire La Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires de Madame la Marquise de La Rochejaquelein* (Paris: Librairie Nationale d'Éducation et de Recreation, 1811).

<sup>38</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 25.

if the unrest of my heart is driving me prematurely along unnaturally strange paths').<sup>39</sup> But from this point on she is never depicted as regretting her masquerade, though her femininity—‘die zarte, nicht zu verleugnende Weiblichkeit’ (‘the tender femininity which cannot be gainsayed’)<sup>40</sup>—makes her fearful as she rides off alone to find the army and locate the Prince de Talmont. Patriotism and duty give her a sense of her own identity as a nobleman, an officer, and a gentleman, and the very fact that she is a woman highlights this sense of honour and duty.

Elisabeth Krimmer comments on the instability of Elisabeth's identity as a man, and maintains that her masquerade is only possible while the prince is alive, because he functions ‘as a guarantee of her femininity’.<sup>41</sup> There is something in this, but I would also argue that Elisabeth's masquerade as a man is a litmus test by which the reader is to judge other characters in the novel. The frivolous, venal, status-obsessed émigrés and their aristocratic English friends in Portsmouth in Book II are constantly prying into what they conceive of as Elisabeth's ‘real’ identity; they refuse to accept the persona she has chosen to present to the world, and they glimpse the woman behind the officer quite quickly. The honest soldiers she rides into battle with do not. The one occasion when the Prince de Talmont denigrates her by calling her a ‘Mädchen’ (‘girl’) is one of the moments when he demonstrates his moral inferiority to Elisabeth. They have ridden into battle together, and the prince says to her:

wir müssen diesem Santerre das Handwerk legen, ich ertrage den Gedanken nicht, vor ihm zurückzuweichen. Und wenn es gelänge! Liebes Herz, begeistert es Dich nicht? Nein, entgegnete Elisabeth kalt, ich spüre nichts als den Kitzel eig'nen Ruhmes. Gott legt nur dann besondere Kraft in unsfern Arm, wenn kein menschlicher Ausweg mehr übrig bleibt. Der ist hier nicht verschlossen, doch freilich, Ihr Name, mein Prinz, würde nicht dabei genannt werden. Elisabeth! Rief der Prinz entrüstet. Er hielt sein Pferd an, indem er sie einige Minuten schweigend betrachtete. Du bist ein Mädchen, sagte er dann weiter reitend, ich begreife es, und vergebe Dir.

Sie aber wandte sich ab, und ritt von dem Augenblick mit dem andern Gefolge hinter ihm.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 90.

<sup>41</sup> Elisabeth Krimmer, *In the Company of Men: Cross-Dressed Women Around 1800* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2004), 60.

<sup>42</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 157.

'We have to show this Santerre how to fight. I cannot bear the thought of retreating before him. And if we succeed! Dear heart, does that not fill you with excitement?' 'No,' Elisabeth replied coldly, 'I feel nothing but your desire for fame. God only gives strength to our arm when there is no other human way out. The way is not closed off here, yet indeed, your name, my prince, would not then be named.' 'Elisabeth!' exclaimed the prince angrily. He reined in his horse and regarded her in silence for some minutes. 'You are a girl,' he then said as he rode on, 'I understand that and forgive you.'

But she turned away, and from that moment rode behind him with the rest of the troop.

The prince's desire for his own fame and glory is unmasked here as a godless and immature goal, and his only way to defend it is to humiliate the young officer George de la Rochfoucauld by calling him a girl. Elisabeth is prepared to lose his love rather than to condone the quest for false glory. The prince, as Baumgartner points out, 'cannot adjust his image of femininity', and so Elisabeth's cross-dressing permanently vitiates their relationship as lovers.<sup>43</sup> The prince is otherwise shown to be an unsuccessful and inept leader, who refuses to listen to Elisabeth's warning at a crucial point and so is captured and executed.

Though Elisabeth has the pride of an officer and a gentleman, and wears a sword as a badge of this identity, we never see her fighting or commanding anyone. She is actually depicted as an angel, who appears when she is needed to lead her people. Before ever she has begun to cross-dress, her uncle, who has given her a white horse, says that she will lead the Vendéans into battle 'wie eine zweite Johanne d'Arc' ('like a second Joan of Arc').<sup>44</sup> When the Vendéans are fighting to take Chantonnay, she takes up the banner on the battlefield:

Verlaßt Eure Fahne nicht Vendeer, rief sie mit klarer Engelsstimme, pflanzt sie auf die Mauern von Chantonnay. Rettet die Ehre Frankreichs! Vertilgt die Gottes- und Königsleugner! Vorwärts, Vendéer [sic]! Vorwärts! Gott und der Heiland sind unter uns!<sup>45</sup>

'Do not desert your standard, Vendéans,' she cried with the clear voice of an angel, 'plant it on the walls of Chantonnay. Save France's honour! Wipe out

<sup>43</sup> Baumgartner, *Public Voices*, 109.

<sup>44</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 38. This page is incorrectly numbered in the first edition of the novel as '88'.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 131.

those who deny God and the King! Onwards, Vendéans, onwards! God and the Saviour are among us'

Something similar happens at the end of the novel, when defeat is at hand. The émigré army has landed in France, Maréchal Hoche has it surrounded, and General Pusey has run away. The soldiers are so discouraged that they throw down their weapons. At this point Elisabeth rides up, 'die goldnen Locken wie eine Glorie vom Sturm emporgehoben und entfaltet, die weiße Fahne zum letzten Mal in ihrer Hand' ('her golden locks lifted up and spread out like a halo by the storm, holding for the last time the white banner in her hand').<sup>46</sup> She rides through the ranks and cries:

Wie, rief sie, seyd Ihr Männer, und scheuet die Gefahr? Ich bin ein Mädchen, jetzt sag' ich es laut, ich focht in mehr als funfzehn [sic] Treffen für meinen König und den Christenglauben. Soll die Natur in allem sich verkehren, und Frankreichs Männer vor Weibern sich verkriechen? . . . Ein Mädchen? ging es murmelnd hin und wieder, ein Madchen? Wer ist sie denn? Wo kommt sie her? Seht doch, wie sich das Gewölk über ihr theilt, der Mond senkt seine Stralen // gerade auf sie nieder.<sup>47</sup>

'What,' she cried, 'are you men and afraid of danger? I am a girl, now I can say it aloud, I fought in more than fifteen encounters for my king and the Christian faith. Shall Nature be inverted in all things and France's men hide from women?' . . . 'A girl?' the murmur went to and fro. 'A girl? Who is she then? From whence does she come? Look how the clouds are opening above her, the moon is sending its rays right down onto her'.

Elisabeth gets separated from the others, her horse collapses, and she finds her way to a crucifix planted on a rock above the sea. Here, with her arm wound round the base of the cross, she lies dying, apologizing to the dead Talmont, saying, 'ich kann nicht mehr' ('I cannot go on'), when Count Damas appears and says: 'Du hier, rief er, meine Heilige! Frankreichs jungfräuliche Ehre!! Flüchtest Du hinaus zum Himmel?—Säume nicht, stirb schönes Heldenmädchen, hier unten ist's vorbei' ("You here," he cried, "my saint! The virginal honour of France! Are you fleeing up to Heaven?—Do not delay, O beautiful heroic maiden, all is over here below").<sup>48</sup> Shortly after this, before Sombreuil gives himself up to save his men, he is resting in a church which contains the figure of an angel. This angel takes on the appearance of Elisabeth, who says that she is guiding him into the next world.

<sup>46</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 194–5.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 195.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 199.

But how does Fouqué legitimate Elisabeth's cross-dressing and martial exploits? First of all, she is careful to distance her from Charlotte Corday. In the novel, Fouqué quotes from a letter from Brissot about Corday:

Ein Weib hat es unternommen Frankreich zu retten. Mit der Mine eines Engels und einer Heldin, sanft und unerschütterlich, den feuchten Blick gegen ihr Opfer gekehrt, traf Charlotte Corday Marats Herz, aber leider war sie zu fanatisch um scharfsinnig zu seyn. Die Liebe zur Freiheit ward ihr unwillkührlich zur Religion und sie selbst deshalb ein blindes Instrument. Ein Dolchstoß erschüttert nicht die Welt'...<sup>49</sup>

A woman undertook the task of saving France. With the mien of an angel and a heroine, gentle and unshakeable, her moist gaze turned towards her victim, Charlotte Corday struck Marat's heart, but unfortunately she was too fanatical to think clearly. Love of freedom involuntarily became her religion and she herself a blind instrument. One dagger-blow does not shake the world.

This is very far from the admiring portrayal of Corday's actions in Christine Westphalen's play *Charlotte Corday*, discussed in Chapter 8.<sup>50</sup>

Elisabeth's actions are also justified by her patriotism. She is fighting to free her country, and in the struggle of the Vendéans against the revolutionary forces we are to see the struggle of the German Army of Liberation against Napoleon. Elisabeth at one point is even described as being like a German! In another strand of the novel we are presented with a very different kind of woman, the Marquise de Robillard, a conventionally feminine but clever woman who goes to Paris and at first supports the revolutionary side, but then dies a good monarchist. This part of the novel enables Fouqué to bring in Robespierre and the Parisian mob, and so show how the revolution led to the Terror. It is the duty of citizens to fight for their country but the powers that be have decreed that only men can do this, so Elisabeth has to become a man to join the army. At the same time, Fouqué shrinks back from the ultimate role-reversal by not allowing her heroine to fight, never mind to kill.

Another strategy employed by Fouqué to legitimate Elisabeth is to present her as the Prince de Talmont's alter ego, particularly in Book II. A woman may act violently if these actions are sanctioned by male authority—by God, her father, her brother, her husband, or her lover. Then, if she actually does kill, it is often 'the man within her' who is said to have done

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>50</sup> Engel Christine Westphalen, *Charlotte Corday. Tragödie in 5 Akten mit Chören. Mit einem Kupfer* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1804).

the violent deed, a trope that crops up in nearly every chapter of this study. In *Das Heldenmädchen aus der Vendée* Talmont asks Elisabeth to carry out his goals, if he dies, 'wie mein eigenes Ich' ('like my own second self').<sup>51</sup> He gives her the papers he is carrying so that she can take them to his friend, the Marquis de Sombreuil, who is now in England getting help for the monarchists. 'Du bist mein höheres besseres Ich!' ('You are my higher, better self!'), Talmont says to Elisabeth.<sup>52</sup> When he is executed Elisabeth is sent his sword, and with this 'Heldenschwert an ihre[r] Hüfte' ('heroic sword at her hip') she sails for England.<sup>53</sup> She has, as it were, become him, the phallic woman filling the place of the dead hero. One could argue that her cross-dressing is not transgressive, since she is really part of Talmont, just as Valiska's behaviour in Bucholtz's novel *Herkules und Valiska*, discussed in Chapter 6, is not transgressive because she is part of Herkules. In Book II, after Talmont's death, Elisabeth several times sees a vision of him at critical moments, directing and legitimating her actions. Baumgartner comments that 'the prince's death renders a formerly independent Elisabeth utterly dependent on male will and vision'.<sup>54</sup>

The final strategy by which Fouqué legitimates Elisabeth is by aligning her with Schiller's Maid of Orleans and the heroic-maiden tradition analysed in Chapter 5. In his last letter before his execution, Talmont calls Elisabeth 'mein starkes Heldenmädchen' ('my strong heroic maiden'),<sup>55</sup> and we have already seen her compared to Joan of Arc. Of course, unlike Schiller's Johanna she does not fight, still less kill in cold blood. What Fouqué shows, however, with both *Edmunds Wege und Irrwege* and *Das Heldenmädchen aus der Vendee*, is that women can be just as courageous as men and that they play a vital role in educating the leaders of the nation in patriotism. Nor is Elisabeth's death merely the conventional female self-sacrifice, whereby only the woman has to die, for other 'good' characters in the novel—Talmont, Damas—are also sacrificed. Fouqué does not undermine her heroine as Lohmann does, for instance, though both Petra Kabus and Karen Baumgartner see the ending of the novel as a closing-down of possibilities for women rather than an opening up.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Fouqué, *Heldenmädchen*, 229.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 230.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 253.

<sup>54</sup> Baumgartner, *Public Voices*, 110.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 253.

<sup>56</sup> Petra Kabus, 'Weibliches Schreiben und Schreiben für Frauen', in Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, *Texte zur Stellung der Frau*, 7–41, at 38; Baumgartner, *Public Voices*, 111.

## Two activists depict the 1848 Revolution

Louise Aston (1814–71) was an extraordinary woman,<sup>57</sup> and her novel *Revolution und Contrerevolution* (1849) is an extraordinary book.<sup>58</sup> She managed to extricate herself from a marriage she was forced into at the age of 17 with Samuel Aston, a man more than twice her age, lived with the writer Rudolf Gottschall without marrying him, wore trousers and smoked in public, repudiated religion, and in 1846 was expelled from Berlin, where she had been living since 1844. In 1848 she took part, as a nurse, in the revolutionary struggle in Schleswig-Holstein with Ludwig von der Tann's volunteers. Here she met her second husband, the doctor Daniel Eduard Meier, whom she married in 1850. In June 1848 she returned to Berlin, where she brought out a political journal, *Der Freischärler* ('The Revolutionary Volunteer'), and founded the 'Club Emanzipierter Frauen' ('Club of Emancipated Women'). Five months later she was again expelled from Berlin, and the same thing happened to her in Hamburg. She and her husband continued to work for the democratic cause, which cost him his job in Bremen. He was able to find work as a doctor in Russia, however, and she accompanied him as a nurse to, for instance, the Crimea. After twenty years of moving round Russia, the Ukraine, Transylvania, Hungary, and Austria, the couple finally returned to Germany, where Louise Meier, as she was now known, died in 1871 without ever seeing her dream of a democratic Germany realized.

In this novel Aston—who at the time she was writing was a divorced mother of three daughters, working as a nurse in Schleswig-Holstein—imagines a heroine called Alice.<sup>59</sup> Alice is a baroness, beautiful and unattached, as skilful a diplomat in the drawing-room as she is a revolutionary on the barricades. The first book of the novel is set in Vienna, where we see Alice the wily politician and arch-manipulator of men. A key figure here, and throughout the novel, is Prince Felix Lizinsky.<sup>60</sup> This character

<sup>57</sup> Renate Möhrmann's chapter on Aston, 'Groteskes Finale', in her monograph *Die andere Frau. Emanzipationsansätze deutscher Schriftstellerinnen im Vorfeld der Achtundvierziger-Revolution* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), 141–50, still gives the best insight into Aston's importance. Kontje also discusses Aston's work in *Women, the Novel, and Domestic Fiction*, 170–82.

<sup>58</sup> Louise Aston, *Revolution und Contrerevolution*, 2 vols. (Mannheim: Grohe, 1849).

<sup>59</sup> Alice also appears in Aston's previous novel *Lydia* (1848), just as Lydia appears in *Revolution und Contrerevolution*.

<sup>60</sup> This figure changes his name twice in the course of the novel. He becomes Prince Lichninsky from p. 57 of volume I, and from p. 184 of volume II, Fürst Lichnowski.

has villainous aspects to his personality, changes allegiance when it suits him, and ends up on the anti-revolutionary side. Alice uses whatever feminine wiles are opportune to find out what Lizinsky's political intentions are—for instance in Book I, when she dissolves in tears to prevent him from leaving her in anger at their midnight rendezvous in Vienna. She then spends the night with him, and retains a soft spot for him to the end, no matter what his treachery, as we see at the close of Book II. That book takes us to Berlin and shows the reader a very different milieu—that of the poor and hungry, who are exploited by the factory-owners who employ them, something Aston had seen for herself in her first husband's factories. A revolutionary club which, naturally, has to meet in secret and which is in constant fear of being betrayed to the authorities, is also described. Alice, it turns out, is the president of this club. As the inevitability of revolution in Berlin draws near, Alice matter-of-factly dresses as a man. Aston portrays the stormy atmosphere of the city very well, with its rumours and confusion, its chief of police with his spies, the various parties using the unrest to their own ends, the hope of the democrats and the poor, the growing desperation that can only find an outlet in violence. Alice moves with supreme courage and control through the various circles, to all of which she has access, conversing with the chief of police as easily as with the working-class revolutionaries. When the revolution breaks out, she takes her pistols and sets off for the barricades. When she arrives at them, in the centre of Berlin, the workers want her to lead them. She takes a group off with her to the Neue Wache ('New Guardhouse') on Unter den Linden in the heart of the city. This is a highly symbolic location. The Neue Wache was built between 1816 and 1818 both as a guardhouse and as a monument to those who had lost their lives in the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. Alice strides over the barricades through a hail of bullets, and later refuses the help of Ralph, the worker-revolutionary, who, politely calling her 'Sie', wants to take her to a place of safety: 'Bah, denkst Du ich bin eine Memme, wenn ich auch ein Weib bin? Nenne mich "Du"', denn hier sind wir Alle Kameraden' ('Oh pooh, do you think I am a coward, even if I am a woman? Call me "Du", for here we are all comrades').<sup>61</sup> The foil to Alice is Lydia, a weak and suffering woman who is constantly either in tears, at prayer, or in a faint, but who finds happiness in love in the course of the novel when she is reunited with Prince von A., while Alice is out in the middle of the night in the midst

<sup>61</sup> Aston, *Revolution*, ii. 99.

of the fighting. Lydia suddenly matures, thanks to finding the right man, blossoms like a flower, and even discovers her own 'heroische Stärke' ('heroic strength').<sup>62</sup>

Alice too matures, but as a political actor and thinker: 'In Alichen, deren Leichtsinn in der Politik an Frivolität grenzte, war durch die großen Scenen der jüngst durchlebten Revolutionsnacht eine erhabene Wehmuth erweckt worden' ('In Alice, whose frivolity in politics bordered on flippancy, a noble sorrow had been awakened by the grand scene of the night of revolution she had just experienced').<sup>63</sup> In Book III she moves to Schleswig-Holstein, to take part in the next stage of the revolution there. She is still armed and dressed as a man, now wearing the uniform of the Schleswig Volunteers. After this Alice sets off for Frankfurt, where the first elected all-German parliament is meeting in the Paulskirche in May 1848. The novel relates the crushing of democratic hopes and finishes with the death of Prince Lizinsky, a traitor to the fatherland. Alice, the indestructible and indefatigable heroine, it seems, lives on. There is no thought of giving her closure by finding a husband for her. She can do very well on her own.<sup>64</sup>

In strong contrast to the fictional portrayals of women on the battlefield are the matter-of-fact memoirs of a woman who really did ride with the military, endure their privations, and hear the shots whistling round her. The work is called *Memoiren einer Frau aus dem badisch-pfälzischen Feldzuge 1848/49*, and the author is Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817–84), a remarkable campaigner for women's rights and for democracy. She followed her second husband, Fritz Anneke, on campaign in the revolution in Baden from May to July 1849, and when the revolution was unsuccessful was forced to flee with him via Switzerland to the United States, where she spent the rest of her life, with the exception of some years again in Switzerland in the 1860s. In the United States she campaigned for women's rights, worked as a journalist, and founded schools for girls. Her memoirs of the uprising in Baden were written in exile and published in Newark.<sup>65</sup> That Anneke took part in the campaign with such matter-of-fact calm bears

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. ii. 151.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. ii. 179.

<sup>64</sup> Sigrid Weigel, 'Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis', in *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 98–101.

<sup>65</sup> See the abridged edition of the memoirs: Mathilde Franziska Anneke, *Mutterland. Memoiren einer Frau aus dem badisch-pfälzischen Feldzuge 1848/49* (Münster: Tende, 1982), and Maria Wagner (ed.), *Mathilde Franziska Anneke in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1980).

witness to the extent to which men and women were jointly involved in the democratic movement of 1848–9, and the enthusiasm with which women responded to the call to political action.<sup>66</sup> Of course, as Carola Lipp has shown, most women supported their men in a manner more in keeping with conventional ideas about women's role—sewing banners for the 'Bürgerwehr' ('citizen militia'), for instance. Nonetheless, the 1848–9 Revolution was a movement in which both sexes took part.

Anneke's participation went far beyond merely supporting the armed struggle from the haven of her own home. Though she did not fight or use weapons herself, she acted as a courier, taking messages between various command posts at great personal danger. Her account resembles that of a modern 'embedded' war reporter, who gives the reader insight not just into the fighting but into how the troops found food and shelter and what the weather was like, and who relates vivid little episodes that bring the campaign to life. Anneke is thrown from her horse, sleeps in her clothes, sometimes sitting up, gets soaked to the skin, goes hungry when there is no food, rides off alone through the fighting, gets separated from and finds her husband again. She narrates all this without any of the fainting, sighing, and weeping indulged in by Naubert's and Lohmann's heroines, and has no sense that what she is doing is unfeminine, still less sinful. She understands that she will be criticized, however, and in her introduction seeks to disarm this criticism:

Viele von Euch im fremden wie im Heimathlande werden mich schmähen, dass ich, ein Weib, dem Kriegsrufe gefolgt zu sein scheine. Ihr besonders, Ihr Frauen daheim, werdet mit ästhetischer Gravität sehr viel schönreden über das was ein Weib thun darf, thun soll. Ich habe auch das einst gethan, bevor ich noch gewusst habe, was ein Weib thun muss wenn der Augenblick vor ihm steht und ihm gebietet. Seid milde, Ihr Frauen, ich appellire an Eure schönste Tugend, seid milde and richtet nicht; wisset, nicht der Krieg hat mich gerufen, sondern die Liebe,—aber ich gestehe es Euch—auch der Hass, der glühende, im Kampf des Lebens erzeugte Hass gegen die Tyrannen und Unterdrücker der heiligen Menschenrechte.<sup>67</sup>

Many of you both abroad and in my homeland will despise me because I, a woman, apparently followed the call to war. You in particular, you women at home, will say many beautiful things with aesthetic dignity about what a woman

<sup>66</sup> Carola Lipp, 'Das Private im Öffentlichen. Geschlechterbeziehung im symbolischen Diskurs der Revolution 1848/19', in Karin Hausen and Heide Wunder (eds.), *Frauengeschichte—Geschlechtergeschichte* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1992), 99–116.

<sup>67</sup> Anneke, *Mutterland*, 9–10.

may, should do. I did that once upon a time too, before I knew what a woman must do when the moment is before her and compels her to act. Be merciful, you women, I appeal to your most beautiful virtue, be merciful and do not judge. Know that it was not war that called me but love—but I admit to you that it was also hatred, that burning hatred created in the struggle of life against the tyrants and the suppressors of human rights.

Her actions are legitimated by the fact that she is doing what she is doing out of love—a common motif—that her husband sanctions her actions, and by the fact that she plays the role of a supporter of, and assistant to, the men, rather than being a combatant herself, still less an officer.

Halfway through her account, when we have had many descriptions of her riding and sleeping rough, she finally tells us what she wore when accomplishing these feats. She tells us how the *Kölnische Zeitung* ('Cologne Times') printed a picture of her heavily armed with a sabre, a double-edged hunting knife, and a musket, and dressed as a man, while she, on the contrary, was 'unbewaffnet und in meiner gewöhnlichen Frauentracht, die nur durch ein leinenes Beinkleid zu einem Reitanzuge complettirt wurde' ('unarmed and in my normal woman's dress, which was only complemented by linen trousers to make a riding costume').<sup>68</sup> By not cross-dressing, still less masquerading as a man or carrying weapons, Anneke has not left her proper sphere, and her unusual actions are the more excusable.

Both Aston and Anneke suffered for their political involvement. Both were driven into exile, and it was Anneke's good fortune, compared to Aston's, that exile brought her to a new country where she could put her energy and political gifts to good use.

### Anti-French propaganda and the conflict over Alsace

The final two works to be discussed in this chapter could not be more different from the previous two, for both of them unthinkingly support German nationalism and contribute to anti-French propaganda. In her libretto for a chamber opera (with music by Hermann Kipper) entitled *Der kleine Tambour oder Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen* (1898), Josephine

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 38.

Grach follows a strategy of promulgating conventional norms of feminine behaviour, while lauding the heroic exception.<sup>69</sup> The piece is designed to be performed by schoolgirls, and is set in a girls' boarding-school in Alsace during the 1870/1 Franco-Prussian War. The girls are German, with the exception of Nathalie Legrand, a French girl from Algiers, and Aggie Dolby, an English girl from India. The teacher, Mère Sabine, tells the girls:

Das Weib—Gott selber berief einst Jeanne d'Arc—  
Zum Werke des Friedens nur soll es sich schürzen,  
Da zeig' es sich mächtig, mutig und stark!<sup>70</sup>

Woman—God himself called Joan of Arc, once upon a time—should only gird her loins for peace. There she shows herself powerful, courageous and strong!

Mère Sabine goes out to the nearby battlefield to see if there are any wounded, and tells the girls to have bandages ready. The German girls explain to Nathalie and Aggie what the Red Cross is, and Aggie and Nathalie—both foreigners from the colonies of their respective countries—show how differently they think about the war compared to the Germans and how unfeeling they are in general. Then Mère Sabine brings in a wounded drummer, who turns out to be a girl. She is an orphan, the child of a soldier, whose father fell in 1866, whereupon she was put in the care of an uncle who was a priest. She helped with soup kitchens once the war broke out, and then ran away, hiding behind the drum in a military band. The general let her stay on as a drummer. When Princess Luise visits the school, the little drummer (whose name we never learn) is given the 'Luisenorden', the medal instituted in 1814 by Friedrich Wilhelm III in honour of his late wife, Queen Luise. This heroic orphan will now be looked after by the Kaiser, and the play ends with a call to God to protect the fatherland and with praise for Kaiser Wilhelm. The heroine's role as a drummer, of course, links her to Eleonore Prochaska, who died drumming at the Battle of the Görde in 1813 during the Wars of Liberation.

A generation later, at the beginning of World War I, another play by a woman focuses on the conflict between Germans and French over Alsace by making a young Alsatian woman the protagonist. This play by Maria

<sup>69</sup> Josephine Grach (libretto), Hermann Kipper (music, Opus 127), *Der kleine Tambour oder Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen (Episode aus dem deutsch-französischen Kriege 1870/71). Ein Singspiel für junge Damen* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, [1898]).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 7.

Zischank—*Die Helden vom Sundgau. Zeitgemäßes Spiel in zwei Aufzügen aus den Vogesenkämpfen 1914/15*—was so popular that it ran into at least three editions.<sup>71</sup> The heroine Jeannette Berton is married to the French lieutenant Gaston Dumier when war breaks out. Suddenly a sense of German nationhood awakens in Jeannette, and her sympathy for the heroic German army and her pride in her German fatherland set up a conflict within her between 'der Liebe des Weibes zum Manne und der deutschen Frau zum deutschen Vaterlande' ('the love of woman for man and of the German woman for the German Fatherland'). She learns of a French plan to betray the Germans, informs the authorities of what she has learned, and helps the Germans thereby to victory. Badly wounded, she dies in the arms of her mother after the Iron Cross has been pinned to her breast. This heroic maiden, again like Eleonore Prochaska, dies of wounds acquired on the battlefield, even though she was a messenger, not a combatant. Her death shows the kind of sacrifice that was expected of German men in World War I, and teaches German women not just to accept but to welcome the 'Heldentod' ('heroic death') of their fathers, sons, brothers, and lovers. If, as the biblical story of Judith shows, God can use a weak woman as an instrument, how much more will He expect of a man.

The play is a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand, it makes the point that nursing the wounded is woman's task in wartime, that peace is what women should work for, and lauds Germany as the nation of true heroism. On the other hand, the drummer-girl has taken part in war directly and is praised for it, and the heroic figure held up as a model for women as peacemakers—namely, Joan of Arc—is French, not German, and herself led an army!

Naubert, Lohmeier, Huber, Fouqué, and Aston imagine a space and a set of situations in which women step outside the barriers patriarchal society builds for them. Aston, Anneke, and to an extent Huber really did step outside these barriers in their own lives, and attempted to live as well as to imagine a freer and more democratic Germany. Grach and Zischank, however, put their pens at the service of anti-French propaganda and German nationalism, very much as the male creators of the 'Heldenmädchen' literature discussed in Chapter 5 did.

<sup>71</sup> Maria Zischank, *Die Helden vom Sundgau. Zeitgemäßes Spiel in zwei Aufzügen aus den Vogesenkämpfen 1914/15, Mit praktischen Anleitungen für die Kostümierung, die Ausstattung, den Vortrag u.ä. von W. Helbig* (Munich: Val. Höfling, n.d.).

## Women's Voices: Less Beast, More Beauty

As set out at the beginning of the last chapter, women writers only really begin to engage seriously with the numerous, indeed omnipresent, male tropes about the woman warrior at the end of the nineteenth century. It is no wonder that they did not do so earlier. Schiller can depict a woman killing a man in cold blood on the battlefield, Kleist can show a woman sinking her teeth into her vanquished foe's flesh, Hebbel can imagine a woman desiring and then castrating her rapist. A woman writer could not have depicted such scenes in a novel, never mind on the stage. Given that Schiller, Kleist, and Hebbel had very clear views about women as the second sex and about the subordinate role they should play in the gender order, it is not surprising that women only begin to contest male imaginings when they themselves have made some progress towards emancipation. The myth of the Amazons, with its notion not just of women as warriors but as state-builders and rulers, running their own affairs as members of a sisterhood, holds out to women a vision of an alternative society to that of patriarchy. This chapter begins with an unusual utopian vision of the Amazon state from the eighteenth century—one of the few from this early period—and then discusses a range of such visions from the early twentieth century. The chapter also analyses women's representations of the biblical figure of Judith and of Charlotte Corday. When a woman writer engages with this material she has to take a number of difficult decisions. Should she simply repeat the stereotypes, since they are so well established? Should she write against them, commenting on or criticizing the vision of woman they put forward? What authority would enable her to do so, when the Ancients, the Bible, and modern psychoanalysis are against her? Should she castigate the transgressive woman she is depicting in order to legitimate her own daring in entering the public sphere herself? Should

she—indeed, can she—make use of the stereotypes for her own purposes, for instance as ammunition in the struggle for political rights?

## Enlightened Amazons

As pointed out in the Chapter 2, tropes of the warrior queen or of the Amazon could not credibly be applied to early modern German princesses, as they could to French or English ones, because German princesses were mothers of the nation rather than sovereign queens or powerful regents. The most powerful female ruler in the German-speaking world before Chancellor Angela Merkel was the empress Maria Theresia (1717–80), though she could not be elected Holy Roman Emperor since she was a woman. She bore her husband Francis of Lorraine (1708–65) sixteen children, of whom thirteen lived to adulthood, and she was often painted surrounded by her numerous progeny, thus emphasizing her role as mother. Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–87) did set Pietro Metastasio's libretto, *La Semiramide riconosciuta* ('Semiramis Recognized', 1729), to music for the opening of the Burgtheater in Vienna and dedicated it to Maria Theresia.<sup>1</sup> But since this Semiramis murders her own husband so that she can reign in his stead, masquerading as a man, it presents a contrast with Maria Theresia, rather than aligning her with a powerful military commander.

A contemporary of Maria Theresia's, however, did use the figure of the Amazon to put across her own political vision. This princess is Maria Antonia Walpurgis, electoral princess of Saxony, née duchess of Bavaria (1724–80), a writer, painter, and composer and at the same time a politically minded and independent-thinking woman. The work in question is the opera *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni*, premièred in Dresden in 1763 by members of Maria Antonia's family.<sup>2</sup> It is a chamber opera, with only one

<sup>1</sup> Two other German composers also set this libretto to music: Johann Adolf Hasse in 1744 and Giacomo Meyerbeer in 1819.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Electress of Saxony, *Talestri, regina delle Amazzoni: dramma per musica* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1765). This was translated by Johann Christoph Gottsched as *Thalestris Königinn der Amazonen, aus dem ital. Singspiele Ihrer Konigl. Hoheit ... Ermelinde Thales in ein Deutsches Trauerspiel verwandelt von J. C. Gottscheden* (Zwickau: n. pub., 1766). See Christine Fischer, 'Musikalische Rollenporträts: Die Opern von Maria Antonia Walpurgis von Sachsen (1724–1780) im zeremoniellen Kontext', in Gabriele Baumbach and Cordula Bischoff (eds.), *Frau und Bildnis 1600–1750: Barocke Repräsentationskultur an europäischen Fürstenhöfen* (Kassel: Kassel UP, 2003), 111–31. Fischer gives 1763 as the date of the première. Some sources claim it was first

male part. Maria Antonia not only wrote the libretto, but composed the music and herself sang the title role of Talestri, the Amazon queen. The work presents the learning process that Talestri has to go through to become a worthy ruler.

The opera begins on the day of Talestri's coronation as queen of the Amazons. She is full of doubts about her fitness to rule, because she has fallen in love with a man and thereby undermined her Amazon identity. This has come about because the Scythian prince Oronte disguised himself as the Amazon Orythia in order to make the acquaintance of the beautiful Talestri. Talestri, thinking Orythia was a woman, became close to him but was horrified when he revealed his true identity. Talestri's counsellor, the older Amazon Tomyris, demands that Talestri have Oronte killed according to Amazon law, simply because he is a man. Talestri cannot bring herself to shed innocent blood but confesses her love for him to all the Amazons and waits for them to depose and punish her. But Tomyris herself has other powerful emotions to contend with. She hates all men, for she was abducted in her youth by the Scythian king and subsequently bore him a child. He then sent her back to her own people but kept the child. She has now realized that Oronte is that child, and therefore her son. Her feelings as a mother are in conflict with her desire to be revenged on all men. Talestri's sister, Antiope, has meanwhile fallen in love with another Scyth called Learco (this is the only male role in the opera) (Fig.22).

Love is the force that solves all these dilemmas. Tomyris helps her son Oronte to escape, while Talestri refuses to practise enmity towards men, and in this way redefines the political temper of the state she rules over. The men, that is, the Scyths, learn that love is more important than conquest, Tomyris does not lose a son, and Antiope is united with her true love Learco. In the battle between the Amazons and the Scyths at the end, Oronte places himself between the two armies and acts as a human shield for the Amazons. Peace is restored, Talestri and Oronte are united, but the Amazons do not give up their Amazon identity. They will not become the subjects of the Scyths but their friends and neighbours: 'Non mai soggette, ma de' vicini amiche saremo in avvenir', or in Gottsched's

performed in Maria Antonia Walpurgis's home court of Munich in 1760. See the notes to Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Electress of Saxony, *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni: dramma per musica* 1760, performed by the Batzdorfer Hofkapelle (Kammermusik, 1998, LC 02336).



Figure 22. The temple of Diana from the opera *Talestri* by Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Electoral Princess of Saxony, engraving by F. Bibiena.

1766 version of the libretto as a German tragedy: ‘Wir wollen künftig nicht der Nachbarn Unterthanen; // Nein, Freundinnen zu seyn, uns neue Wege bahnen’ (‘In future we do not want to be the subjects of our neighbours, but their friends and carve out new ways’).<sup>3</sup>

The opera was performed on 24 August 1763, just at the moment when the Seven Years War between Prussia and Saxony had come to an end—a war in which Saxony suffered horribly and during which Maria Antonia Walpurgis and her husband had remained behind in Dresden with Maria Josepha, Maria Antonia’s domineering Habsburg mother-in-law, to run the kingdom, while the real ruler, August III, king of Poland and elector of Saxony, took refuge in Warsaw. At the point when the opera was performed Maria Josepha was dead and the king was back in Dresden. The electoral princess was politically ambitious and functioned in real life

<sup>3</sup> Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Bd. 3. *Sämtliche Dramenübertragungen*, ed. Joachim Birke (Berlin: de Gruyter 1970), 131–95.

as the confidante and political partner of her husband, the physically disabled electoral prince Friedrich Christian. She was looking ahead to the day when the two of them would be ruling Electoral Saxony, whether or not Friedrich Christian would be elected king of Poland, like his father and grandfather. The central theme of the opera is what makes a good queen. How can a woman combine duty to her people with her own emotions and inclinations? How can she be both just and merciful? What is the alternative to war? How can gender roles be reconciled? Talestri learns to admit her emotions but to control her warlike nature, and thus becomes fit to rule. She and Oronte, himself half an Amazon through his mother Tomyris, show that war is not the answer, that Scyths and Amazons should no longer hate each other. Together, the couple exercise a civilizing influence over Scyths and Amazons alike. Even after her marriage to Oronte, Talestri remains queen of the Amazons, the only Amazon queen in any German work known to me to do so. Maria Antonia is, of course, picking up on the idea of women as peacemakers in contrast to men as warriors, but she is also setting out her programme for what she hoped would be a long and civilizing rule at her husband's side. He came to the throne on 5 October 1763, six weeks after *Talestri* was performed. On 17 December he died, having ruled for only two months. Maria Antonia did not get the chance to rule as an enlightened Amazon queen.

## Early twentieth-century Amazons

As we saw in Chapter 2, the German interest in and scholarly investigation of classical myth, art, and archaeology during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made the Amazons a topic of constant interest to intellectuals. The publication that brought about the greatest change in thinking about the Amazons is the controversial work by Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (1861). To sum this immense work up briefly: Bachofen sees what he calls 'Gynaikokratie' (that is, 'matriarchy' or 'mother right'), based on monogamy and the rule of law, as the second stage in the development of mankind but as being necessarily superseded by patriarchy.<sup>4</sup> Amazonism is a

<sup>4</sup> Peter Davies, 'Myth and Maternalism in the Work of Johann Jakob Bachofen', *German Studies Review*, 28 (2005), 501–18.

more progressive and ordered society than the previous stage of 'hetairism', and Bachofen demonstrates that the Amazons were builders of cities, therefore capable of political organization. But at the same time Amazon society is violent and degenerate (Bachofen's word is 'entartet'), and women should not be engaging in war. Though Bachofen clearly saw patriarchy as the highest form of social organization, his work gave the Amazons prominence. Not only was a society other than patriarchy possible, such societies had apparently actually existed. Bachofen thereby provided women with an alternative model that they could adapt for their own purposes.

A striking early example of this is Marie Haushofer's pageant *Zwölf Culturbilder aus dem Leben der Frau* ('Twelve Cultural Tableaux from the Life of Woman'), performed on 21 October 1899 on the occasion of the First Bavarian Women's Congress in Munich. One of the scenes in this pageant presents the Amazons, played by campaigners for women's rights (Fig. 23). Their leader says:

Es lebe die Freiheit, es lebt wer gewann  
 Im Kampfe den Sieg, im Siege den Mann!  
 Und ist er besiegt, so ist er uns Knecht,  
 Wir schaffen uns selber unser Recht!<sup>5</sup>

Long live freedom, whoever was victorious in battle, whoever captured a man in battle will live! And when a man has been captured, then he is our slave. We will create our own laws!

The photographs of the occasion were taken by Sophia N. Goudstikker, herself a suffragette, a lesbian, and one of the founders of the photographic studio Hofatelier Elvira, one of the first business ventures to be founded and run by women in Germany. For these women the notion of the Amazon is empowering. It continued to be a metaphor that a number of very different women used in their struggle for recognition and equal rights up to World War II—Mathilde Varting, Adeline Rittershaus, and Bertha Eckstein-Diener.

Mathilde Vaerting (1884–1977) was a sociologist and education expert who, in 1921, in an extraordinary example of early affirmative action, was installed as a full professor of education at the University of Jena in the teeth of the opposition of the other professors. Her treatise *Die weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat und die männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat* ('The Female

<sup>5</sup> Marie Haushofer, *Zwölf Culturbilder aus dem Leben der Frau* (Munich: Akademische Buchdruckerei von F Straub, 1899), 6.



Figure 23. The Amazons, one of the scenes from Marie Haushofer's pageant for the First Bavarian Women's Congress in 1899, *Zwölf Culturbilder aus dem Leben der Frau*. Photo by Sophia N. Goudstikker (1865–1924).

Character in the Male State and the Male Character in the Female State') appeared in 1921, with the author's name given first on the title-page neutrally as 'Dr. M. Vaerting' and then, at the end of the introduction, as: 'Dr. Mathilde Vaerting. Dr. Mathias Vaerting.' There never was a Dr. Mathias Vaerting, so her opponents claimed she was trying to deceive her readers. Today we can regard the dual name as presenting the very equality of the sexes that the book proposes.

In her treatise she discusses what she calls 'eingeschlechtliche Vorherrschaft' ('monosexual dominance'), and demonstrates that the patriarchal system of her own time and the centuries that precede it is culturally constructed, not based on nature. She analyses the way in which morals, property rights, division of labour, public versus private spheres, education, religion, the relative strength and shape of men's and women's bodies, and their distinguishing dress are affected, indeed distorted, by patriarchy, and demonstrates that every essentializing statement about women under patriarchy can be applied to men under matriarchy. Her approach to the question of whether women are natural peacemakers and men natural warriors is typical of her method. According to her, some past societies made women the warriors, others men. If one sex subordinates and subjugates the other, this will lead, first, to a more militant and aggressive society, and second, will mean that the dominant sex provides the warriors. Here she—daringly—compares the male-dominated state of Prussia with the female-dominated Amazon state.<sup>6</sup> Men are warlike when their society makes them so, but there is nothing in their natures to make them the natural warriors. Women can be just as good warriors as men, and are not predestined to be more peaceable than men. As evidence she cites the usual list of warlike women rulers from antiquity to modern times. Nor do women's bodies make them unsuitable for war. Their fuller, softer, weaker bodies in modern times are the result of their easier life indoors where food is plentiful. It is clear that Vaerting has read Bachofen to good purpose, finding useful ammunition in his account of Amazon societies. She ends her treatise by calling for power for women: 'Nur die Macht kann die Frau frei machen' ('only power can make women free'),<sup>7</sup> but does not wish matriarchy to succeed patriarchy. This would be to repeat

<sup>6</sup> Mathilde Vaerting, *Die weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat und die männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat* (Karlsruhe: G. Braunsche Hofbuchdruckerei und Verlag, 1921; repr. Berlin: Frauen-Zentrum, 1976), 123–34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 168.

the mistakes of the past. Vaerting calls rather for 'Gleichberechtigung' ('equal rights').<sup>8</sup>

Peter Davies sees Vaerting's work as part of a trend among a certain kind of woman thinker:

Those [women] genuinely marginalized in the professions, in scholarship, and in political movements take on a set of theories about matriarchal societies (theories that were coming under increasing scholarly attack in the years after 1900), and create an ideological link between what they read as Bachofen's idea of womanhood and their own sociopolitical situation; increasingly, Bachofen comes to be seen as discoverer and developer of a mythical, intuitive, feminine form of knowledge that gives access to truths that are repressed by both masculine science and supposedly masculinized 'Frauenrechtlerinnen' (campaginiers for women's rights).<sup>9</sup>

Amazons are not female versions of the male intellectual but in these interpretations free, primeval, physical beings.

In the article just cited, Davies discusses very fully the way in which some women writers in the 1920 and 1930s use Amazon myths to interpret Nordic and Germanic mythology, setting the Nordic race up as the superior one. An example is *Altnordische Frauen* ('Norse Women', 1917) by the Icelandic scholar and expert on Scandinavian literature Adeline Rittershaus (1867–1924), which envisages strong, self-confident Nordic women fighting alongside their menfolk and in partnership with them.<sup>10</sup> How women readers of her work must have relished this change of emphasis after a century of the kinds of depiction of Brünhild analysed in Chapter 3. Rittershaus's longing for equal recognition—she taught for twenty years at the University of Zurich without being made a professor, and had to fight for her right to teach at all, even though she single-handedly built up the study of both ancient and modern Scandinavian literature at that university—is surely reflected in this vision of strong women recognized as equals by their menfolk. Davies shows how women exploiting theories of matriarchy to raise women's standing, and Nazi women writers lauding the

<sup>8</sup> Vaerting, *Die weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat und die männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat*.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Davies, 'Women Warriors, Feminism, and National Socialism: The Reception of J. J. Bachofen's View of Amazons Among German and Austrian Right-wing Women Writers', in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death: Warlike Women in the German Imagination from the Renaissance to the Present* (Rochester, NY: Camden House: 2009), 45–58.

<sup>10</sup> Adeline Rittershaus, *Altnordische Frauen* (Frauenfeld and Leipzig: Huber & Co., 1917).

Germanic woman, had to walk a tightrope once the NSDAP came to power, 'stripping the mythic material of its contemporary political resonance, and relegating it to a distant, and ultimately harmless past'.<sup>11</sup>

Bertha Eckstein-Diener (1874–1948) led a very different life to that of the two highly qualified academics just discussed. Diener was cursed by being born into a wealthy, upwardly mobile family in Vienna which allowed her eldest brother Carl to study and become a distinguished professor of geology, while condemning the equally gifted Bertha to a life of intellectual starvation as a well-brought-up, decorative girl of good family.<sup>12</sup> Young people did not attain their majority in Austria in those days until the age of 24, which meant for Diener a life of cloistered boredom, waiting for what her parents considered a suitable bridegroom to come along. This did not happen. Instead, immediately she came of age, Diener married her own choice, the intellectual Friedrich Eckstein (1861–1939), a vegetarian and theosophist. Through him she got to know a wide circle of other intellectuals in Vienna—including Arthur Schnitzler, Peter Altenberg, Adolf Loos, and Karl Kraus—and was initiated into a wide range of disciplines new to her—music, mathematics, medieval history, and Indian philosophy and religion, among others. Two years later, however, she fell in love with a very different intellectual, Theodor Beer, already Professor of Biology at the University of Vienna at the age of 34, extremely wealthy and a ladies' man. Bertha left her husband, began to travel, to catch up on her education, and to write. Her relationship with Beer went through a number of phases but was always tempestuous and at times humiliating, and though she bore him a son, they never married. As well as translations, she published novels, journalistic pieces, and a number of cultural histories, taking as her nom-de-plume 'Sir Galahad'. Her best-known work is *Mütter und Amazonen* ('Mothers and Amazons', 1932).<sup>13</sup> Like Vaerting's *Männerstaat und Frauenstaat*, it was republished in the 1970s in the Second Women's Movement.

In the introduction Eckstein-Diener cites two works as the chief influences on her own book: Bachofen's *Mother Right* and Robert Briffault's *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions* (1927). Eckstein-Diener did

<sup>11</sup> Davies, 'Women Warriors, Feminism, and National Socialism', 51.

<sup>12</sup> Sibylle Mulot-Déri, *Sir Galahad. Porträt einer Verschollenen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Sir Galahad (Bertha Eckstein-Diener), *Mütter und Amazonen. Ein Umriss weiblicher Reiche* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1932). Repr. As *Mütter und Amazonen. Liebe und Macht im Frauenreich* (Frankfurt–Berlin–Vienna: Ullstein, 1981).

an immense amount of research for *Mütter und Amazonen*, examining a wide range of ancient sources. She begins the introduction to her book with the impressively sweeping sentence: 'Dies ist die erste weibliche Kulturgeschichte' ('This is the first female history of culture'),<sup>14</sup> and the book itself with a similarly sweeping sentence: 'Am Anfang war die Frau' ('In the beginning was the woman').<sup>15</sup> She wants to give women a sense of their own history and heritage, a heritage which has been taken from them by the commonly accepted but distorted accounts of the human race. Her point is that society has changed, patriarchy is more or less finished, and the modern woman has freed herself from the stifling expectations of previous times: 'Tatsächlich hebt in unsrer so markanten Zivilisationsphase spontan ein Gestaltwandel der Weibsubstanz an, schon sichtbar in zwei gleichsam abkunftlosen Typen: Girl und *zeitlose Frau*' ('In fact the very form that female substance takes has begun to change in the remarkable phase that our civilization finds itself in; two types, equally without precedent, are already visible: the modern girl and the timeless woman').<sup>16</sup> Matriarchy is what the modern world needs, for women are talented at government, at ruling without rules, at creating communities, not bureaucracies:

Ein Weltalter der Massen, dem Männlichen nicht eben günstig, ist aber gerade das Element der besänftigenden, aufbauenden, ordnenden, eminent sozialen Mutterinstinkte, nicht verkörpert in irgend hergebrachter Form, vielmehr der Vielfalt gigantisch komplizierter Wirkungswelt gewachsen.<sup>17</sup>

An age of the masses, not propitious to the masculine principle, is, however, exactly the element of the calming, constructive, ordering, eminently social mother instinct, not embodied in any traditional form, rather adequate to the multiplicity of the hugely complicated world of influences.

This new system is not a reactivation of the old matriarchy or mother right. It is a new system that will be brought into being by the 'timeless woman'. Woman will lead and man will follow, going beyond communism and fascism. Eckstein-Diener's vision is very different from liberal and Marxism feminism, but it represents a vision of, and a hope for, a new society which, like Vaerting's, is not merely the superseding of the tyranny of one sex by the tyranny of the other.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Galahad (Bertha Eckstein-Diener), *Mütter und Amazonen*. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 11.      <sup>16</sup> Ibid. 317.      <sup>17</sup> Ibid. 319.

## Utopian visions of the Amazon

Bachofen's influence is visible not just in the work of sociologists, philologists, and cultural historians but in that of creative writers also. Two different works of high quality are Maria Elisabeth Kähnert's novel *Amazonen vor Athen* ('Amazons Outside Athens')<sup>18</sup> and Ilse Langner's comedy, *Amazonen* ('Amazons').<sup>19</sup>

Kähnert (1901–62) was a writer whose career was seriously affected by National Socialism. In 1923 she had written a film script and in 1933 a novel, *Jagdstaffel 365: eine deutsche Fliegergruppe im letzten Weltkrieg* ('Squadron 365: A German Flying Unit in the Last World War'), which had gone into twenty-two reprintings by 1941. She had to flee into exile in Locarno, however, when the Nazis came to power, and *Amazonen vor Athen* was published there in 1938. After the war she worked as a translator from English and as a film critic.

*Amazonen vor Athen* already declares on the dust-jacket that it is an attempt to re-create the Amazon society described by Bachofen and show the clash of the dying matriarchal world and the rising patriarchal one. The novel is divided into three books. Book I is set in the Amazon state of Themiskyra on the banks of the Black Sea, and begins when the Greek Agathon is fished out of the water, having been blown off course in a storm. Instead of killing him instantly as is their normal custom, the Amazons let him live amongst them because an oracle talks of a temptation which at the same time is a test. He is to be eternally a prisoner, but is to write down all that they tell him about their state and their way of life. In Chapter 10 we have an intimation of the tragic love story that is to come, when Joa, chosen to succeed the present Amazon queen Diana, asks Agathon to tell her about his prince, Theseus. During the coronation ceremonies Agathon escapes and returns to Athens, which is where Book II is set. Agathon tells Theseus about the land of the mothers and about the golden girdle of the queen. Theseus decides to make war against the Amazons and bring back the girdle as a trophy. He captures Joa and takes her to Athens. Book III tells how the

<sup>18</sup> Maria Elisabeth Kähnert, *Amazonen vor Athen. Historischer Roman* (Locarno-Leipzig: Verbanio-Verlag 1938).

<sup>19</sup> Ilse Langner, *Amazonen. Komödie*, in *Dramen II*, ed. Eberhard Günter Schulz (Würzburg: Bergstadtverlag Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1991). The first version was published in Berlin by S. Fischer in 1933 and then in a second, amended version in 1939.

Amazons set off to Athens to recapture Joa, but she has fallen in love with Theseus and become his wife. The once-free Amazon leader has subordinated herself to her Greek husband. The Amazons make war on the Athenians, there is a terrible battle, at least two thousand combatants on each side are killed, and the Amazon force is reduced to three hundred. During the fighting Diana's arrow kills Joa and Theseus brings her body to Diana. The Amazons remain for a time on the hills outside Athens but then they leave, their tragic little group setting off back to where they came from. On the way, Diana dies of sorrow at the bad outcome of the campaign (here Kähnert quotes Pausanias) and the Amazons build her a funeral pyre, on which they burn her body and that of Joa side by side. The Athenians meanwhile build a temple to the Amazons, and at its inauguration Theseus places Joa's Girdle of Untouchability on its altar. Though the Amazons have been decimated, they have not been eradicated; Penthesilea is still alive and swears to lead them again to victory. So there is a shimmer of hope, though the Greeks have won for now.

Ilse Langner's vision is far more optimistic, because she takes the story up to her own day. The first version of her highly original and entertaining comedy was in rehearsal in April 1933 when she realized that the time was not right for it. Her ideas about women's emancipation were out of tune with those of the Nazis, so she withdrew the play, as Monika Melchert demonstrates on the basis of Langner's letters, hoping for a more propitious time that never came.<sup>20</sup> Langner wrote a second version in 1936, and it is this later text that is under discussion here. The play begins with a prologue set in a wealthy, upper-middle-class drawing-room in Berlin around 1900 and ends with an epilogue set in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin in 1936. These two scenes frame what Langner called the 'Kernstück' (the heart of the play), a five-act drama about the meeting between Amazons and Greeks, which is set on the Black Sea at the time of the Trojan War around 1100 BC. The prologue and the epilogue present modern variants of the classical figures in the Amazon play.

The prologue depicts a family council called by Alfred, an extremely stiff and patriarchal young government civil servant, to discipline his fiancée Pentha, who has just qualified as a doctor with the highest honours. Alfred requires Pentha to give up her profession on marriage. He had always

<sup>20</sup> Monika Melchert, *Die Dramatikerin Ilse Langner. 'Die Frau, die erst kommen wird . . .'*  (Berlin: Trafo, 2002), 66.

thought of her studies as a sort of ‘gehobene Lieberhaberei’ (‘a higher hobby’),<sup>21</sup> he says, and demands that Pentha choose between him and her profession. She chooses the latter, saying that women can no longer be locked up. She identifies with the Amazons: ‘ich habe sie immer als meine Urschwestern gesehen, kühn und tapfer, nicht abhängig vom Mann, sie schlagen sich selbst durch, sie kämpfen, sie sterben lieber, als daß sie sich gefangen geben’ (‘I always saw them as my sisters in the ancient world, daring and brave, not dependent on a man, they find their own way, they fight, they would rather die than be taken prisoner’).<sup>22</sup> At the end of this speech we hear marching and trumpets, and the scene changes from the over-furnished upper-middle-class parlour to what the stage directions describe as the blazing bright midday of the Amazon world.

The first act of the Amazon play shows us the Amazons victorious over the Greeks. The Amazons have invaded Athens and captured the Greeks while the latter, unarmed, were watching the Olympic Games. Compared to the brown, well-muscled, athletic Amazons, the Greeks come across as effete and decadent. This scene presents the three most important Amazons in the play, as Langner described them in her diary:

Die königliche Staatsmännin Penthesilea, die die Tragik des Führers erlebt,— Prothoe, die sanfte und grausame, leidenschaftlich und töricht, ganz Frau und noch tiefer Mutter, Thermodossa zuletzt, die Erfinderin des Flugzeuges, die auf ihren Formeln wie auf einer silbernen Leiter emporsteigt.<sup>23</sup>

The regal stateswoman Penthesilea, who experiences the tragedy of the leader,— Prothoe, the gentle and cruel one, passionate and silly, all woman and more profoundly a mother, finally Thermodossa, the inventor of the aeroplane, who climbs upwards on her mathematical formulae as on a silver ladder.

Penthesilea may be the victorious military leader, but in Athens she, more farsighted than her women, has seen the possibilities of a city, of culture: ‘gebändigte Natur’ (‘tamed nature’).<sup>24</sup> A city can be defended, it gives peace, and it enables a people to increase its population, which the Amazons need. Penthesilea’s ability to appreciate Greek culture is mirrored by Odysseus’s ability to admire Amazon naturalness. He contrasts the Amazons favourably with Greek women, what he calls ‘unsere aufgeputzte Hausputen’ (‘our dolled-up domestic turkeys’).<sup>25</sup> In this, Penthesilea and Odysseus are

<sup>21</sup> Langner, *Amazonen*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted from Melchert, *Die Dramatikerin Ilse Langner*, 49–50.

<sup>24</sup> Langner, *Amazonen*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 24.

partners. Odysseus, far cleverer than Achilles, whom he considers a handsome, muscle-bound nitwit, has perceived that the Amazons propose to have one night of sexual orgy with their captives and then kill them, and that the Greek men need to find a way to escape their captors.

Pentesilea behaves like a tyrannical male ruler, and treats her devoted lover Prothoe in the same offhand way that a man might treat a woman deeply in love with him. Since Achilles is a famous hero, Pentesilea must have him as her lover simply because of his status, but he falls in love with Prothoe and she with him, and she is prepared to give up both her love for Pentesilea and her Amazon way of life for his sake. This shows the weakness of the Amazons—when their womanly nature is activated, they can no longer remain Amazons. Odysseus sees to it that the Amazons capture a chest full of Greek women's clothes and make-up, calculating that they will not be able to resist them. They are indeed so entranced that they instantly espouse this ideal of beauty rather than their own Amazon one, and become like Greek wives and mothers and so no longer want to kill their men. Culture has defeated nature. Odysseus also demonstrates to Pentesilea that, in order to build the city she dreams of, she needs the Greeks who have the knowledge and skill to design and construct it. Again, culture is victorious. Odysseus genuinely admires Pentesilea, and she and he begin to dream of a new world in which men and women would work together creatively. Odysseus tells her:

Sie sind die Frau von Morgen, die Frau, die erst kommen wird! Erkennen Sie Ihre Bestimmung, Ihnen ist es vorbehalten, eine neue Beziehung zwischen Mann und Frau, eine neue herrliche Ära gemeinsamen Schaffens heraufzuführen!<sup>26</sup>

You are the woman of tomorrow, the woman who first has to emerge! Recognize your destiny, you are fated to bring about a new relationship between man and woman, a new splendid era of cooperative creativity.

But as the relationship between Amazons and Greeks develops, Pentesilea recognizes that, by building a city, she too would lose her freedom. Most of the women leave with their Greek lovers, and Pentesilea is left with a handful of Amazons with whom she departs for the mountains: 'Die besten Amazonen folgen mir, die Tapfersten, Erprobtesten!' ('the best Amazons will follow me, the bravest, the most battle-hardened!')<sup>27</sup> She sees that her

<sup>26</sup> Langer, *Amazonen*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 94.

time has not yet come, but with her last words she hopes that an age will dawn in which the soft women of patriarchy will awaken 'zur alten Freiheit und neuer Gemeinsamkeit' ('to the ancient freedom and the new cooperation and community').<sup>28</sup> Langner had read both Mathilde Vaerting (whom she personally knew well) and 'Sir Galahad', as Peter Davies and Monika Melchert have shown.<sup>29</sup> Penthesilea is fated to lead the Amazons at the moment when their matriarchal state has to give way to the patriarchal one. But like Kähnert, Langner does not have Penthesilea die at the end of the play, but retreat with a nucleus of Amazons, thus keeping the idea alive for the future.<sup>30</sup>

Langner's epilogue then jumps to 1936 and the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, where we see this future. There is an aviation contest in which the two final remaining contestants are Fräulein König ('Miss King', that is, Penthesilea), supported naturally by the women and flying a plane called the Flying Amazon, and Mr Heros ('Mr Hero', that is, Achilles), supported by the men and flying the Silver Bird. Miss King wins, in spite of having stopped to assist Mr Hero when he was in trouble. Even though she has won, he congratulates her on her victory and says of her: 'sie ist große Klasse und ein wunderbarer Kamerad' ('she is fantastic and a wonderful comrade').<sup>31</sup> The new age of cooperation and mutual respect between men and women has arrived, and women have been able to compensate for their inferior bodily strength by the advent of technology. Peter Davies finds this ending unsatisfying, saying that 'it has the unpleasant feel of an attempt to soften the play's original satirical intent as a way of making it acceptable'.<sup>32</sup> Both Melchert and I, on the other hand, read this ending as a hopeful vision, perhaps one that Langer needed in the increasingly dark days of the 1930s. I would go so far as to say that it is the most hopeful vision about the relations between men and women in any text about the woman warrior since Maria Antonia Walpurgis's opera of 1763.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Davies, 'Ilse Langner's *Amazonen* and the Reception of J. J. Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht*', *German Life and Letters*, 56 (2003), 223–43.

<sup>30</sup> Whether Kähnert knew Langner's play is not known. It would have to have been in the first version.

<sup>31</sup> Langner, *Amazonen*, 100.

<sup>32</sup> Davies, 'Ilse Langner's *Amazonen*', 242.

<sup>33</sup> In 1946, in her essay '*Credo quia absurdum*', Langner expresses her disillusionment at the way in which women admired and looked up to the warlike hero and thereby contributed to the German disaster. Women's emancipation has not developed as she had hoped.

## Judith from *fin de siècle* to 1920

If women can wrest an emancipatory message from the myth of the Amazons, what can they do with the Judith story, which, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, was always eroticized in German culture, but where, from the first third of the nineteenth century, emphasis was increasingly placed on Judith's psychopathology. From Heine on, the woman who deceives and kills—and, it is implied, castrates—the man she has slept with becomes the central consideration in works by men about Judith. By the late nineteenth century Judith and Salome are often merged in such a way that Judith, the chaste widow and liberator of her people, becomes completely buried under various sado-masochistic fantasies.<sup>34</sup> If we examine four works by women writers between 1895 and 1921—a novella by Maria Janitschek, a biblical drama by Anna Sartory, a novel by Katharina Gondlach, and a play for an all-female cast by Rosemarie Menschick—we see that all of them reject this psychopathology, in particular the idea that Judith desired, still less had sex with, Holofernes. In various ways they each restore the notion of Judith as a heroic figure.<sup>35</sup>

Janitschek is the only one to tackle the topic of sex head-on, while the other three repudiate any sexual connection between Judith and Holofernes. Menschick even denies any desire on Holofernes's part for such contact. Sartory makes Judith into an exemplar of suffering, Gondlach shows her as the instrument not just of the Lord but of her dead husband—a motif to be found in Sartory's play too. Menschick is interested in the topic of guilt, of how a good woman can kill and how, having killed, she can live on afterwards. The link between killing and war is made by two of the authors—Gondlach and Menschick—writing at the end of, or just after, World War I. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, it

<sup>34</sup> See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1986).

<sup>35</sup> Maria Janitschek, *Königin Judith*, in *Lilienzauber. Novellen* (1895). *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 45 (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2001), 35561–81; Anna Sartory, *Judith, die Heldin von Bethulia. Drama in vier Akten* (Einsiedeln–Waldshut–Cologne: Verlagsanstalt Benziger, 1907); Katharina Gondlach, *Judith. Eine Erzählung aus vorchristlicher Zeit* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1918); Rosemarie Menschick, *Judith. Biblisches Schauspiel in 4 Aufzügen mit nur weiblichen Rollen* (Munich: Buchhandlung Leohaus, 1921). A different and earlier version of this section appeared as Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, 'The Figure of Judith in Works by German Women Writers from 1895 to 1921', in Clare Bielby and Anna Richards (eds.), *Women and Death 3: Women's Representations of Death in German Culture Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 101–15.

is the question of guilt and killing that the two plays about Charlotte Corday, the murderer of Jean Marat, consider.

In the earliest of the four works about Judith, the novella *Königin Judith* ('Queen Judith', 1895), Maria Janitschek tells the story of an attempted seduction, leaving out completely the aspect of Judith as liberator of an embattled people. Janitschek's Kronios is a rich, brutal, debauched, late nineteenth-century aristocrat whose castle lies in the forests south of Mostar in Bosnia. One day he catches sight of Judith, the beautiful Jewess, a member of a despised and impoverished minority. He has her kidnapped and brought to his fortress, where he intends to rape her, but her sense of self protects her from his sexual games. She refuses to wear the exotic clothes he provides, just as she refuses the food and wine he offers her. She is clothed—one might say, armoured—in her own dignity and sense of self. When he asks why she refuses to wear the silk garments offered to her, for instance, she says coldly that she has never yet worn other people's clothes. She is articulate, she explains, because she was the pupil of a famous Syrian rabbi, and she is contemptuous of Kronios's erotic fantasies and his accessories because for her these are the props of someone who is not a real man. The jewels he shows her are too bright for her eyes, she says, and the overheated rooms remind her of the dwelling of an old man. She does not need all this luxury because she alone is enough: 'aber in der Mitte würde *ich* stehen, *ich, ich, ich,* und der Sieg würde vor mich hinknien und meine Füße küssen . . .' ('but I would stand in the centre, I, I, I, and victory would kneel before me and kiss my feet').<sup>36</sup> Kronios demands to sleep with her. She undresses completely, even letting her hair down, praying aloud for strength and protection as she does so. Janitschek describes the naked Judith as clothed in a cold majesty—drawing on the traditional iconography of nakedness as connoting chastity and truth—and in her presence Kronios is impotent. She does not fear him and so he has no hold over her, for he can only conceive of sex as the triumph of the strong over the weak. He suddenly achieves a deep insight, his 'day of Damascus'. As she leaves he gives her a pistol as protection on her way home, and learns then that she was proof against him because, having married the man she loves a week before, she was no longer a virgin. As he accompanies her through the forest the so-called Devil of Mostar asks, referring to her husband: 'Und er wird Dir . . . diese

<sup>36</sup> Janitschek, *Königin Judith*, 35575.

Nacht . . . glauben?' ('And he will believe you . . . about this night?').<sup>37</sup> At this point Judith realizes that her husband will not believe that she remained chaste, and so she is dishonoured even though she has done nothing wrong. She shoots 'Jene[n] Teufel, der sie um ihr Glück gebracht hat, um ihre verschwiegene, weiße, meertiefe Liebe, weil sie seinen Augen behagte!!' ('that devil who robbed her of her happiness, of her silent, white love, deep as the ocean, because she pleased his eye!!')<sup>38</sup> At the moment of his death the Devil of Mostar feels love for the first time in his life. 'Königin Judith' ('Queen Judith') are his last words. He has learned that a woman can be a person and not just a sex object, but learns it too late. This Judith kills not because one man is brutal, but because patriarchal culture is incapable of believing in a woman's virtue and strength of purpose. Janitschek undermines the notion at the heart of Hebbel's play, that a woman, morally and physically weak by definition, only has to see a violent and highly sexed man to desire him, for her Judith finds Kronios ridiculous. Like Hebbel, however, Janitschek's Judith kills not because she is a heroic liberator, risking her own life for her people, but out of revenge.

In 1907 Anna Sartory brings the Judith story much closer to its religious origins, though with an early twentieth-century concept of femininity. Her play is a large-scale biblical drama with twenty-four named characters, mostly speaking blank verse. Instead of Janitschek's almost aggressively fearless and independent heroine, her Judith displays more traditional feminine virtues. She does not appear until the beginning of the second act, standing to one side of the stage with bent head. The Council of the Elders is coming to an end and she has just proposed something to them. What this is emerges only gradually. She calls on God to direct her arm and the Bethulians to pray for her. Her eloquence is not demonstrated, as in the Septuagint, by showing her castigating the faint-hearted Bethulians, but instead by comforting Tirza, Ozias's daughter. Judith tells Tirza that women are born weak but become great through suffering in which they show 'Löwenkraft und -mut' ('a lion's strength and courage').<sup>39</sup> Woman is made for suffering, according to this Judith. The last scene in the act shows Judith putting on her jewellery, feeling as she does so the hand of her dead husband, Manasse,<sup>40</sup> enfolding her own—the typical motif we have seen again and again, in which the woman warrior does not act as an

<sup>37</sup> Janitschek, *Königin Judith*, 35582.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 35583.

<sup>39</sup> Sartory, *Judith*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Some accounts call Judith's husband Manasse, others Manasses.

independent agent but is guided by a male relative (and God, of course).<sup>41</sup> Before she leaves for Holofernes's camp, Judith prays for two things: that she shall not be defiled but return pure to Bethulia, and that she shall either be victorious or die a hero's death—a late nineteenth-century idea, rather than a biblical one.

Act III is set in Holofernes's camp, where Judith has swiftly become his favourite. He has organized a dinner at which she is the principal guest, and here Sartory brings on the invented figure of Ruth, the crazed wife of Ozias. She and her two children have left Bethulia because they are dying of thirst. Sartory uses this episode to show Judith as a mother figure, since she gives them water in defiance of Holofernes, and subsequently comforts the children and sends them back to Bethulia. Holofernes cannot understand why Judith should care about the Jewish people, and she explains what it means when the bond between ruler and ruled is one of love, not fear. Holofernes drinks several cups of wine very fast and becomes tipsy, disappearing into his tent to sleep it off. Judith enters the tent and kills Holofernes off-stage—all the audience hears is ‘ein dumper Hall’ (‘a dull thud’).<sup>42</sup> In other words, just as in the sixteenth-century biblical plays about Judith, no stage time is allowed for anything other than the killing to take place; there is no time for Holofernes and Judith to have sex. In Act IV Judith arrives outside the walls of Bethulia, saying that God has guided the arm of a weak woman, whereupon she suddenly faints with exhaustion. The woman who beheaded Holofernes is only a weak woman after all. When the Bethilians find her, Judith repeats again and again that it was God who did the deed, it was God’s strength, it was God who guided her arm. Judith restores her two children to the sorrowing Ruth and is praised by Ozias as an angel and a mother. She makes it very clear that nothing of an untoward sexual nature happened to her in Holofernes’s camp: she is still pure, which fits with the angelic character Ozias has just given her.

So Sartory’s Judith kills Holofernes and saves Bethulia, but is remarkable not for her leadership of the Bethilians, her cunning, and her seductiveness, but for her submissiveness to God’s will, her chastity, her love of her people,

<sup>41</sup> See the discussion of this phenomenon in relation to the terrorist Ulrike Meinhof by Sarah Colvin, in her essay ‘Witch, Amazon, or Joan of Arc? Ulrike Meinhof’s Defenders, or How to Legitimize a Violent Woman’, in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 250–72.

<sup>42</sup> Sartory, *Judith*, 75.

and her motherly qualities. The figures of Tirza and of Ruth and her children are introduced solely to demonstrate Judith's motherliness. Judith's contact with Holofernes is characterized by the majestic eloquence with which she shows him the humane and civilized virtues of the Jews in contrast to his own savagery. He is depicted as fascinated by and attracted to her, but she never acts the seductress with him, though it is clear that she puts on her best jewels and clothes to meet him. In a cryptic note at the end of the play, the author says that Judith's character, as presented in the Bible, would not be suitable for the modern stage, which likes to cover even sacred characters with too much 'glänzenden Erdenstaub' ('shining earthly dust').<sup>43</sup> We can only speculate that what she means here is the interpretation of the Judith story as one of sex and desire.

Katharina Gondlach's 311-page novel *Judith*, published in 1918, seeks to make Judith's deed comprehensible by showing how it emerges logically out of her married life, and her relationship to her husband Manasses. Gondlach depicts his trust in her and the prophetic vision of her future greatness which the high priest supposedly has while Manasses is still alive. Though her version is otherwise very close to the Septuagint, she introduces a new element into the story, namely, the idea that Manasses not only authorizes Judith's deed but actually directs her actions from beyond the grave. Judith has a dream in which her deceased husband appears and commands her: 'Töte den Löwen!' ('Kill the lion!'),<sup>44</sup> a command she does not understand at this point. When Judith is invited to Holofernes's tent to dinner and she knows that he is expecting to make love to her after having been made to wait for three days, she prays fervently and then sees Manasses at her side:

Manasses trug in seiner Rechten ein krummes Schwert, mit Smaragd und Rubinen die goldene Scheide geschmückt.—Und er trat vor sie hin, zog die furchtbare Waffe heraus.—'Nimm und tote den Löwen', gebot er,—'Töte den Löwen—den Holofernes. Nimm das Schwert, der Herr befiehlt es. Und sei stark! Sei gesegnet und stark im Namen des Herrn'.—<sup>45</sup>

In his right hand Manasses bore a curved sword, whose scabbard was decorated with emeralds and rubies.—And he stepped before her and drew the frightful weapon.—'Take this and kill the lion', he commanded,—'Kill the lion—Holofernes. Take the sword, the Lord commands it. And be strong! Be blessed and strong in the name of the Lord'—.

<sup>43</sup> Sartory, *Judith*, 97.

<sup>44</sup> Gondlach, *Judith*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 247–8.

At the moment when she is about to chop off the head of the drunken, and by now unconscious, Holofernes, her husband again directs her actions: 'Das Schwert—es schien zu rufen,—nein—nicht das Schwert,—der Herr—war es,—nein—auch er nicht.—Manasses,—ja, Manasses.—Er gebot' ('The sword—it seemed to call her,—no—not the sword,—it was—the Lord,—no, not Him either.—Manasses,—yes, Manasses.—He gave the orders').<sup>46</sup> This Judith is not a resolute warrior, but a submissive wife carrying out her husband's wishes. That the work was published in the last year of World War I may account for the resigned disgust with which Judith regards her deed, even though it was ordained both by God and her dead husband. 'Murder' is the word she uses, though the state of war justifies the act:

Nun sah sie mit kalter Überlegung auf ihr Werk. Krieg bedeutet Mord. Die Hauptaufgabe im Krieg ist des Führers habhaft zu werden und den Geist, der den Feldzug leitet, aufzuheben. Ob nun die Fürsten kämpften oder die Soldaten mit dem Schwert, oder ob durch eines Weibes Schönheit der Feldherr durch Leidenschaft geschwächt der Hand dieses Weibes zum Opfer fällt,—es ist gleich,—Krieg—Kriegslist,—Es mußte sein, und es geschah . . . 'Dem Herrn sei Dank!'<sup>47</sup>

Now she looked with cold calculation at her deed. War means murder. The principal task in war is to capture the leader and to remove the spirit which leads the campaign. Whether princes or soldiers fight with the sword or whether the general, weakened by passion for a woman's beauty, falls victim to that woman, is all the same—war—the strategems of war—it had to be, and it came to pass . . . 'Thanks be to God!'

This Judith is close to the biblical figure in that she is credited with the eloquence she shows in the Septuagint, chiding the Bethulians for their lack of trust in God, telling them what to do when she has brought Holofernes's head back to the city, and praising God in her great song at the victory dinner. But the actual killing, even though it is premeditated and linked to her very deliberate seduction and hoodwinking of Holofernes, is again and again shown to be the work of Manasses.

Rosemarie Menschick's prose play *Judith* (1921), for a cast of seventeen female characters, centres on the ethical question of what it means to kill; more specifically, what it means for a woman to kill. All the action in Menschick's play takes place in Bethulia, and neither the Assyrian camp nor Holofernes are shown at all. This enables Menschick to focus on what makes a murderer, what constitutes guilt, whether motive can excuse a

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 269.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 271–2.

violent deed, how a killer lives on after the deed, and whether killing always demands expiation of some sort on the part of the killer. The first act introduces two contrasting female figures—Dalila and Judith. Dalila is jealous of the people's love for the compassionate Judith, and above all of Benjamin's love for her. Menschick's Judith, suddenly filled with divine inspiration, addresses the despairing women of Bethulia in the words of the Bible, foretelling the help that will come on the third day and the part she will play in saving the city. Dalila, eaten up with jealousy and anger, falls in with her maid Saphira's suggestion to hurt Judith by injuring the person she loves most in the world, her mother Salome. Here, by giving Judith's mother this name, Menschick is removing it from its usual association in this period with perverse eroticism.

In the second act Judith explains to her mother how she heard the voice of the Lord and how she will go to Holofernes, beautifully dressed as in the days of her marriage, to plead for the Bethulians. Her mother fears she will fall into the clutches of the debauched Assyrian, but Judith believes that there is good in everyone and that she will be safe. Though terrified at what she is about to do and fearing that she is deceiving herself about Holofernes, she ultimately accedes to God's plan and surrenders her will to His. A cherub comes to her as God's mouthpiece, telling her that he does not want her to abase herself before the heathen but that she should kill him. He hands her a sword, and Judith sees a vision of God and knows herself to be strong. Judith's last scene in Act II is her parting from her beloved mother.

In the third act Saphira, Dalila's maid, persuades Salome's maid Rachel that Judith has set off to seduce Holofernes out of lust, and that Rachel should poison her mistress so that she will not have to discover her daughter's shameful conduct. Just as Judith returns victorious, Salome dies. Judith has, of course, not been dishonoured, for Holofernes fell into a drunken sleep before he could so much as touch her. The last scene in this act opens with Judith in a state of exaltation, holding the bloodied sword in her hand and praising God for making her his instrument. When she lays down the sword her exaltation leaves her, and she realizes that she has murdered:

Wer bin ich, daß ich leidenschaftslos ihn schlug? Er sah mich nicht mit wildem, gierigem Blicke an, bewundernd und mit Ehrfurcht ist er mir begegnet. Ich sah den reinen Funken leuchten ihm im Auge, ich hatt' geglaubt an ihn, er hat mich nicht enttauscht—und dennoch tötete ich ihn.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Gondlach, *Judith*, 33.

What kind of a person am I that I killed him in cold blood? He did not look at me with a wild, greedy gaze, he approached me with admiration and respect. I saw the pure spark in his eyes, I believed in him, he did not disappoint me—and yet I killed him.

Menschick makes Judith's dilemma here far more interesting than a mere crime of revenge. She, though a good woman, was led by God to kill a man in cold blood. She feels overpowering guilt, saying, 'Die Furien sind hinter mir' ('the Furies are after me'),<sup>49</sup> and asks how she can expiate her deed. She goes to her mother for comfort, only to find her dead. Now she knows that this is the sacrifice demanded of her to expiate her murder. She is being punished in an unexpected way for what she did.

The fourth act shows us Dalila, the real instigator to murder, also racked with remorse. As in Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), where the murder carried out by the figure of Parricida acts as a foil to the deed carried out by the eponymous hero, here Dalila's act in destroying Judith's mother out of jealousy contrasts with Judith's killing of Holofernes. Since her deed Judith has become a kind of saint and healer, 'ein lichter Engel der Barmherzigkeit' ('a bright angel of mercy').<sup>50</sup> When Dalila finally gets up the courage to confess her deed to Judith, it turns out that Judith already knows what she has done and has forgiven her, accepting her mother's death as punishment for her own 'crime'. In a denial of free will and moral choice, she tells Dalila: 'Gottes Wege sind nicht unsere Wege. Auch du warst nur sein Werkzeug' ('God's ways are not our ways. You too were his instrument').<sup>51</sup> Dalila's murder, it appears, was not her doing but God's! Dalila wants to die as her penance, but Judith tells her that the Lord wants her to live. In a phrase that must have resonated with an audience three years after World War I, Judith says: 'schwere Wunden hat der Krieg geschlagen und vieler Hände und warmer Herzen bedarf es, sie zu heilen' ('the war has caused many serious wounds, and many hands and warm hearts are needed to heal them').<sup>52</sup> Saphira, the maid who did the actual poisoning, then comes on, having been driven by a vision of Salome, the woman she killed, to drink the same poison. She dies, and Judith tells Dalila that her task now is to live on in love and take the secret of what she did to her grave. It was God's will that the only other person to know of Dalila's deed is now dead, so it is God's will that Dalila live. She accepts and the curtain falls. This, therefore, is not a play

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

about masculinity and femininity or about the link between sex and violence, but about what it means to kill and live on in the knowledge that one has done so. Menschick restores Judith's eloquence and dignity and, it seems at first, her courage and heroism. But in equating her slaying of Holofernes, the enemy of the Bethulians, and Dalila's underhand killing of Salome by having her poisoned at third hand, Menschick undermines the ethical message of the play. The virtuous Judith is God's puppet, but so, it seems, is the base Dalila, a deeply questionable notion. The only choice women are allowed to make in this play is to accept God's plan for them, and to suffer in submission to His will.

These four works by women writers take issue with the contemporary understanding of the Judith story in two ways: they reject the notion of Judith and Holofernes as lovers and of Judith longing to be deflowered by the Assyrian enemy, and they are concerned to restore Judith as a positive, indeed heroic, figure. However, these authors are just as troubled as male writers by the idea of Judith as a killer, as a warrior who efficiently slays a defenceless man in his sleep with his own weapon and who lives on to a ripe old age. Therefore they evolve a series of strategies to cope with this problem. Janitschek represents Judith as shooting a modern-day, thoroughly reprehensible Holofernes for having destroyed her own personal happiness, a far less gory and physically demanding method than cutting off his head. Gondlach shows her carrying out the killing at the behest of, and as the instrument of, her dead husband. Sartory shows her to have the character of a motherly saint, whose most egregious quality is the capacity to suffer. Menschick depicts her as expiating her guilt by suffering the loss of her mother, murdered in her turn. Even in the early twentieth century, it seems that women, like men, cannot regard the figure of Judith with anything other than unease.

Women sometimes still use the figure of Judith to indicate strength and agency, as Janitschek does. The lead singer of the popular Berlin band 'Wir sind Helden' ('We are Heroes') has the stage-name 'Judith Holofernes'. This articulate and highly intelligent young songwriter and guitarist has deliberately combined the incompatible to convey, so she explains in interviews, specifically feminist and emancipatory ideas. The name conveys the idea of a 'Mann-Weib', literally a 'man-woman', the German word both for a virago and a hermaphrodite. In an interview in the feminist magazine *EMMA* in 2004 (no. 2) Judith Holofernes, that is, the singer Judith Holfeder-von der Tann, said: 'ich bin schon rebellisch und auch immer'

mal wieder wütend im Sinne von: nicht abzuspeisen' ('I was always a rebel and have always been angry in the sense that you can't do me down'). This is the only possible answer to the eroticized depictions of Judith produced by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century men.

Nowadays both male and female artists of all kinds use the figure of Judith to explore the ethics of terrorism, as we saw in the analysis of Hochhuth's play *Judith* (1984) in Chapter 4. The director Susanne Schneider has made a film, for which she also wrote the script, called *Es kommt der Tag* ('The Day Dawns', 2009), about a Red Army Faction terrorist who gave up her daughter in order to pursue her terrorist mission. The daughter, now around 30, tracks down her mother. The mother, played by Iris Berben, is called Judith.

## Visions of Charlotte Corday from 1804 and 1931

Just as male writers take the figure of Charlotte Corday, the woman who stabbed Jean Marat to death in Paris in 1793, as a way to debate political assassination, so too do women. The questions of women's agency and of the legitimacy of killing a tyrant in a good cause are debated, just as in the works about Judith just discussed, in two dramas by women about Corday, Engel Christine Westphalen's play of 1804 and Erika Mitterer's of 1931.

In 1804 the publishing house of Hoffmann in Hamburg brought out an anonymous play entitled simply *Charlotte Corday*, which depicts the eponymous heroine with the kind of reverence we saw Jean Paul and others employ towards her in Chapter 4. But this play uses the figure to think about gender, violence, and women's agency.<sup>53</sup> The play is a five-act blank-verse tragedy, with a prologue, an epilogue, and a chorus between each act, and the author is Engel Christine Westphalen (1758–1840), a poet and Hamburg senator's wife. Westphalen took a great interest in contemporary events in France, had contact not merely with French émigrés but with liberal and even Jacobin circles, and, given her wide acquaintanceship with intellectuals and literary figures in Hamburg, it is likely that she was inspired to write her drama about Corday by the admiration felt for the

<sup>53</sup> Engel Christine von Westphalen, *Charlotte Corday. Traagödie in Fünf Akten mit Chören. Mit einem Kupfer* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1804).

Frenchwoman by her fellow Hamburg resident, the poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803).<sup>54</sup> Westphalen's play is a martyr tragedy, and closely resembles such seventeenth-century dramas as Andreas Gryphius' *Catharina von Georgien* ('Catharine of Georgia') and *Carolus Stuardus* ('Charles I'; both first published in 1657). As in Gryphius, the main character is idealized and exists to exemplify a series of moral truths, the main difference being that Westphalen substitutes a generalized transcendence for Gryphius' Christian God. Just as *Catharina von Georgien* opens with a monologue by the figure of 'Ewigkeit' ('Eternity'), so Westphalen's play opens with a monologue by 'Der Genius der Wahrheit' ('The Spirit of Truth'). As in Gryphius' play, Westphalen's choruses interpret the events of the previous act for the audience, giving them the moral tools with which to judge what they have just seen. Like Gryphius' eponymous heroine, Corday is set up from the beginning to be a martyr. Westphalen changes the historical record to make her not the orphan she was in reality but a young woman with a loving father, mother, and brother. Her family believe in the French Revolution, as she does, and are just as horrified about the wrong turn it has taken. By inventing a family for her heroine, Westphalen is able to show Corday to be a loving daughter, as Stephanie Hilger points out.<sup>55</sup> More important is that it stamps her views of the Terror with her father's authority by demonstrating that they think alike. In order to give Corday maximum moral credit, Westphalen takes great care to show, at every stage, that her actions are deliberate and rational. She invents a previous visit to Paris by Corday to show that her views on the Terror are based on personal knowledge. She also presents Corday as having accomplished that task so necessary for a martyr—'Entsagung' ('renunciation'). Westphalen invents an acquaintanceship between the Corday family and the Mainz revolutionary Adam Lux (spelled 'Luchs' by Westphalen). Luchs loved Eugenie, Corday's friend, so Charlotte, 'Nach einem schweren—harten—langen Kampf' ('after a difficult—hard—long struggle'),<sup>56</sup> had to give up

<sup>54</sup> See Inge Stephan, ‘“Die erhabne Männin Corday”. Christine Westphalens Drama *Charlotte Corday* (1804) und der Corday-Kult am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts’, in *Inszenierte Weiblichkeit. Codierung der Geschlechter in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 135–62, at 153. For male reactions to Corday see Ch. 4 above.

<sup>55</sup> Stephanie Hilger, ‘The Murderess on Stage: Christine Westphaen's *Charlotte Corday*’, in Bielby and Richards (eds.), *Women and Death* 3, 71–87. I am very grateful to the author for permission to see this article before publication.

<sup>56</sup> Westphalen, *Corday*, 40.

any idea of love. This rising above desire to reach a plateau of Stoic calm is again a typical feature of the Baroque martyr.

Westphalen is very aware of the gender discourse of the era and of the conflicting expectations there are of women. She shows Charlotte's emotional response to what she saw in Paris, which is so violent that her parents do not want her ever to return there, on the ground that witnessing further violent scenes would be too much for her. When she controls her emotions, however, as her parents demand, her father objects:

VATER: Ich lieb' es nicht, wenn sich die Weiblichkeit,  
Der zarte Sinn, der euren Reiz erhöht,  
Durch Heldenmuth in dem Geschlecht verläugnet.

CHARLOTTE *mit Befremdung*:

Meinst Du, es könnte beides nicht zusammen  
Bestehn, mein lieber Vater?<sup>57</sup>

FATHER: I do not like it when femininity, the delicate sense that heightens the charms of you women is suppressed in your sex by heroism.

CHARLOTTE [*rather put out*]: Do you not think that both could exist side by side, my dear father?

The constant worry that Charlotte's parents and brother have that she may not be able to stay calm stands in complete contrast to the resolution with which she herself acts when she comes to carry out her deed in Act III. Before then, however, Westphalen has introduced the figure of Adam Luchs and made him the friend of Chaveau-Lagarde, a historical figure who was Corday's defence lawyer at her trial. Luchs wants to kill Marat himself, but Lagarde talks him out of it, saying that it would not solve matters but would only lead to further executions. The lengthy discussions between the men result in no action being taken at all. Westphalen also presents a meeting between Marat, Robespierre, Danton, and St Just, during which they plan the murders of all members of the National Convention, while Marat in a subsequent soliloquy describes how he aims ultimately to take sole power himself. All this sets the scene for Corday's deed, which happens off-stage in Act III. Having carried it out, she realizes that she could escape quite easily, but this would be dishonorable and the action of a mere assassin. She says of herself: 'Frei war bei ihr Gedank'—Entschluss—und That' ('With her, thought, decision, and deed were free').<sup>58</sup> When Marat's servant rushes in to arrest her, she says:

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 84.      <sup>58</sup> Ibid. 130.

Zurück! Hier steh' ich, meiner That bewusst!

*Mit Enthusiasmus.*

Welch schwelend Hochgefühl ergreift mein Herz!

O, Vaterland, allein befreit durch mich!<sup>59</sup>

Back! Here I stand, conscious of my deed! [With emotion.] What a swelling and exalted feeling grips my heart! O, Fatherland, liberated by me alone!

The next scene shows us Luchs, disguised as a woman and still planning to kill Marat, when news is brought of the murder, which, says the informant, was probably committed by a man in women's clothing! Westphalen confronts us here yet again with Corday's deed as being one thought to be beyond the capabilities of her sex.

Act IV stages the trial, at which Corday appears all in white. She took her decision, she tells the judge, because a ray of light from above penetrated her breast and there burst into flames. But the decision was hers alone: 'Allein gefasst, allein bei mir gereift' ('Taken alone, matured in me alone').<sup>60</sup> Westphalen again goes out of her way to show that Corday, far from being a passive creature who can only act if manipulated by someone else, is a woman who thinks and acts for herself. She says to the judge:

Am Gängelband des fremden Wollens, glaubst Du,  
Sei ich geleitet,—gleich einem Kind”—mechanisch?

*Mit Hoheit.*

Du kennst Dich auf des Menschen Wollen schlecht! . . .

Ich dachte—handelte—ich fragte nicht!

Mein ist die That, mein ihre spätesten Früchte!<sup>61</sup>

I was led along by the leading reins of someone else's will, you think, like a child, mechanically? [With dignity.] You do not know the human will very well. I thought, acted, I did not ask questions. Mine is the deed, mine its latest fruits!

As Hilger shows, Westphalen used parts of the trial record verbatim.

From here on, the text is one long process of canonization. Luchs appears in Corday's prison cell dressed again in women's clothes and offers to change places with her, but she repudiates such a cowardly solution, just as Carolus Stuardus refuses to be saved in Gryphius' drama of that name. She goes to her death, a willing sacrifice and in her letter to her family, based on an actual letter written by Corday, she compares herself to Cato, Socrates, Brutus, and Arria—all figures who died bravely and for political reasons.

<sup>59</sup> Westphalen, *Corday*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 172.

Other characters refer to her again and again as an angel, a noble, quasi-divine figure, a great soul, a saint. Her death is described as a hero's death ('Heldentod')<sup>62</sup> by Luchs, who goes to the scaffold himself. The last scene is Marat's funeral procession, an ironic counterpoint to the deaths of the saintly revolutionaries. The Genius of Virtue is depicted on Marat's coffin, we are told in the stage directions, and he is described as the Friend of the People. But the epilogue compares him to Vice and Corday to Virtue—just in case the audience has missed the point.

Westphalen depicts an unreal, idealized figure, just as Gryphius does. Her martyr rises above her emotions and her sexuality and repudiates the limitations placed on her by the contemporary definition of woman's role. She decides first to kill and then to die, seeing both as necessary actions to free her country, and showing that a woman can have more courage and resolution than a man. The comparison with Schiller's Joan of Arc—written three years before—is striking. Westphalen's play is not as lively as Schiller's but is every bit as daring, in that it shows a woman acting autonomously, not as the puppet of either God or of a human authority figure. Stephanie Hilger describes how Goethe thought Westphalen would have done better to spend her time knitting herself a nice warm underskirt for the winter when he read the play. It is precisely this dismissive attitude towards women's participation in the public sphere that Westphalen's drama refuses to accept and that, at least in part, explains her clear identification with her subject—'mein ist die That' ('mine is the deed').

Erika Mitterer's play *Charlotte Corday* (1931) could not be more different. It was written when the Austrian Mitterer (1906–2001) was only 25. She had studied the source material on Corday in various libraries and archives in Paris, but it may have been a meeting with Stefan Zweig in 1927 that suggested the subject to her, for Zweig had been working on a play about Adam Lux for some years.<sup>63</sup> Not only was Mitterer's play neither published nor performed during her lifetime, it was not published at all until 2003.<sup>64</sup> Helga Abret explains how the political situation in 1931 made plays about the French Revolution too politically sensitive to be performed, and how, once Hitler had forbidden the performance of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* after an

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 201.

<sup>63</sup> See Helga Abret, 'Tyrannenmord. Politische Attentate in der Literatur und Erika Mitterers Drama *Charlotte Corday*', *Der literarische Zaunkönig*, 3 (2008), 7–19, at 14.

<sup>64</sup> Erika Mitterer, *Charlotte Corday. Drama in vier Aufzügen*, in *Dramen*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Edition Doppelpunkt, 2003).

attempt on his own life in 1940, *Charlotte Corday* did not even have a chance of publication. In terms of both ideas and form, the play is astonishingly mature for such a young writer. Formally, the action moves from Caen in Act I, to Robespierre's study in Act II, to Marat's apartment in Act III, to the Conciergerie prison in Act IV. Mitterer is able to portray pathos, comedy, ideas, and character with great economy of language. Her Corday is, as in history, a lone figure, without parents or siblings. 'Niemand liebte mich und ich liebte niemand' ('no one loved me and I loved no one').<sup>65</sup> She is both interested in politics and compassionate, and thinks—naively, as it turns out—that she can save many lives by taking one. What the play shows is her gradual realization of the moral implications of her deed, and what it demonstrates to the audience is the difficulty of deciding who is a villain and who is a hero. When Corday has killed Marat, she is made to realize not only that his mistress loved him and genuinely mourns him, but that the people loved him too and that he did a number of good things for them. She is therefore not their heroine; rather, Marat is their hero instead. Instead of glorifying Corday, therefore, and identifying with her as Westphalen did, Mitterer uses her case to debate the ethics and the usefulness of politically motivated assassination, in a period in which such murders were frequent.

Through her action, Corday brings doom to innocent people who had the bad luck to meet her by chance before she carried out the assassination. It is not until the final act that she realizes how misplaced her confidence in her own judgement was: 'Blind, blind,—blind war ich und wollte die Welt sehend machen' ('Blind, blind—I was blind and wanted to make the world see').<sup>66</sup> One of the other condemned prisoners, Mme de Suchy, says to her: 'Nicht an Mut fehlt es Ihnen, Charlotte, nur an Demut' ('You don't lack courage, Charlotte, only humility').<sup>67</sup> It is only when the young volunteer Louis de Mattis comes into the prison, as Lux did in Westphalen's play, to offer to change clothes with her and so engineer her freedom, that she realizes that she must pay the price for her deed; she must actively choose to expiate what she did. 'Das Schicksal Gottes bis zum Ende wollen, es nicht bloß erdulden' ('to want God's fate to the end, not merely to suffer it').<sup>68</sup> As General Wympfen had said to her in Act I, 'Nur das Opfer unterscheidet den Helden vom Verbrecher' ('Only the sacrifice distinguishes the hero from the criminal').<sup>69</sup> Her last meeting before she goes to the scaffold is with

<sup>65</sup> Mitterer, *Charlotte Corday* 48.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 50.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 12.

Rouffe, the egotistical poet who wants to die with her on the scaffold to ensure his own lasting fame in the history books. She repudiates him with scorn: 'Nur der Glaube rechtfertigt die Tat!' ('Only belief justifies the deed!')<sup>70</sup> Charlotte then goes calmly to her death. Mitterer's questions, therefore, are the same modern questions that Rolf Hochhuth poses in his *Judith*: does the end ever justify the means? How can one judge if killing one person, whether it be Wilhelm Kube, Ronald Reagan, or Jean Marat, will save lives, still less save a country or the world? Both authors come to the same conclusion: the woman who carries out the killing only becomes heroic in her death, and only by dying herself can her deed be justified. A twentieth-century writer can only portray the efficacy and morality of assassination, no matter how evil the victim or how good the cause, as questionable.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 59.

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A regiment of women warriors strides across the battlefield of German culture—on the stage, in the opera house, on the page, and in paintings and prints. These warriors are re-imaginings by men of figures

such as the Amazons, the Valkyries, and the biblical killer Judith. They are transgressive and frightening figures who leave their proper female sphere and have to be made safe by being killed, deflowered, or both. *Beauty or Beast?* explores some of the most compelling works of Western culture—Cranach's and Klimt's paintings of Judith, Schiller's Joan of Arc, Hebbel's Judith, Wagner's Brünnhilde, Fritz Lang's Brünhild. Today the image of the woman warrior as terrorist is a familiar one. What are the roots of these imaginings? And how are they related to Freud's ideas about women's sexuality?

Jacket illustration: Friedrich Kaulbach (1822-1903), *Germania 1914*, oil on canvas, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

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